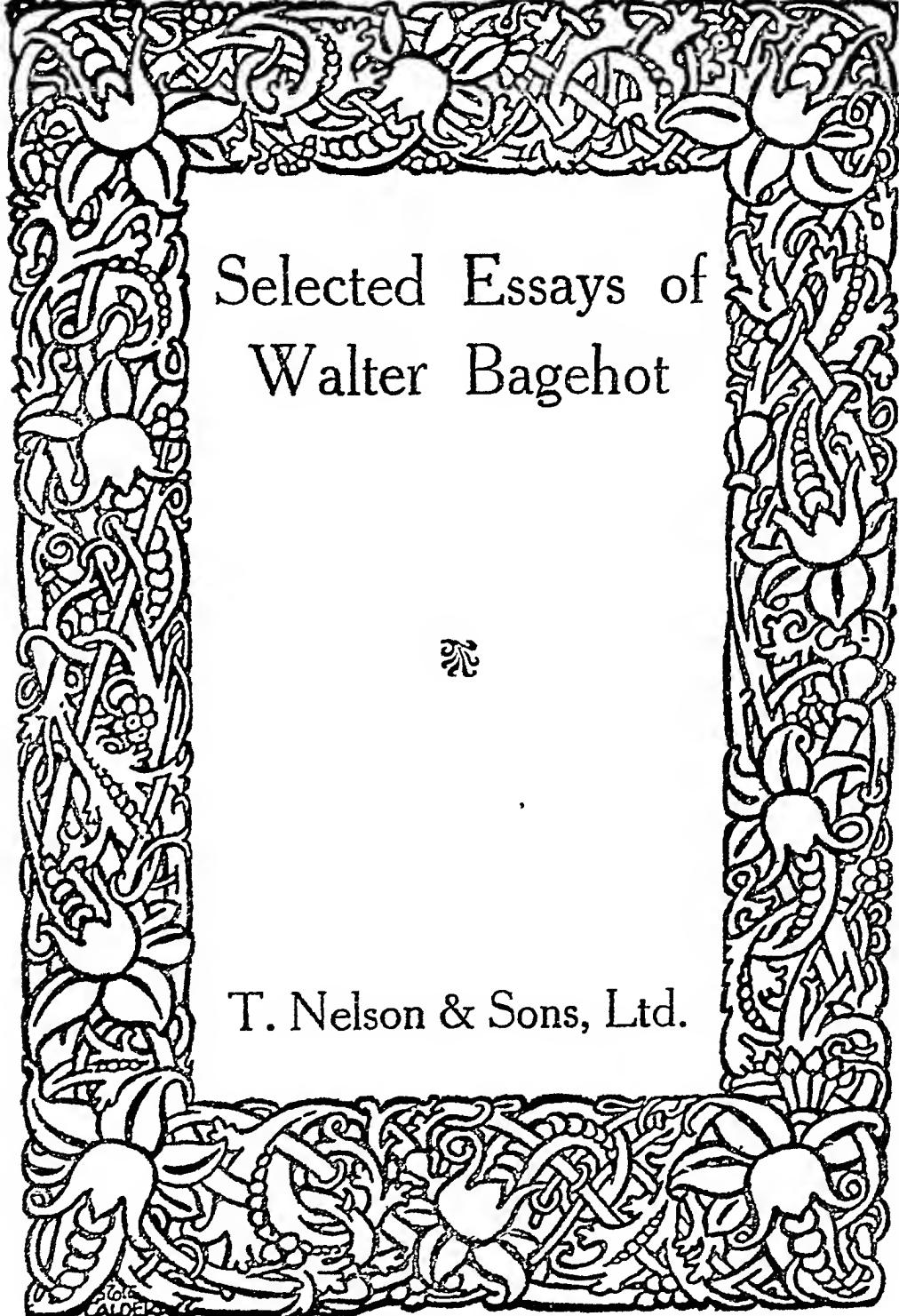




SELECTED ESSAYS OF  
WALTER BAGEHOT





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Walter Bagehot



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WALTER BAGEHOT was born in the year 1826 at Langport in Somersetshire. In 1852 he was called to the Bar, but he presently relinquished it for banking, and joined his father in the family business at Langport. Though he acquired a great knowledge of his profession, yet his strongest interest was in literature, and he soon became a contributor to the chief journals. From 1855 onward he was one of the editors of *The National Review*, and from 1858 he was editor of *The Economist*. He was a man of powerful and masculine mind, which mastered any subject to which it was applied, and he was also the possessor of a style of exceptional lucidity and brilliance. His chief works are *Lombard Street* (1873), a description of the money market, and *The English Constitution* (1867), a study of our unwritten system of government. *Physics and Politics* (1869) is an attempt to apply the principles of natural selection to political society. After his death his essays were collected in two volumes, *Literary Studies* (1879) and *Economic Studies* (1880). To the first of these a short memoir is prefixed. His works are reprinted in Messrs. Longmans' Silver Library, and there is a collected library edition in ten volumes, issued by the same publishers and edited by Mrs Russell Barrington.



## CONTENTS

SHAKESPEARE—THE MAN . . . . .	9
EDWARD GIBBON . . . . .	59
THE CHARACTER OF SIR ROBERT PEEL . . . . .	116
LORD BROUGHAM . . . . .	157
WILLIAM Pitt . . . . .	203
BOLINGBROKE AS A STATESMAN . . . . .	246
THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY . . . . .	298
THE WAVERLEY NOVELS . . . . .	341
LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU . . . . .	382
WORDSWORTH, TENNYSON, AND BROWNING; OR, PURE, ORNATE, AND GROTESQUE ART IN ENGLISH POETRY . . . . .	417



# SELECTED ESSAYS OF WALTER BAGEHOT

## SHAKESPEARE—THE MAN \*

(1853)

THE greatest of English poets, it is often said, is but a name “No letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn with any fullness by a contemporary,” have been extracted by antiquaries from the piles of rubbish which they have sifted. Yet of no person is there a clearer picture in the popular fancy. You seem to have known Shakespeare—to have seen Shakespeare—to have been friends with Shakespeare. We would attempt a slight delineation of the popular idea which has been formed, not from loose tradition or remote research, not from what some one says some one else said that the poet said, but from data which are at least undoubted, from the sure testimony of his certain works.

Some extreme sceptics, we know, doubt whether it is possible to deduce anything as to an author’s character from his works. Yet surely people do not keep a tame

\* *Shakespeare et son Temps: Étude Littéraire* Par M. Guizot  
Paris, 1852

*Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare’s Plays from early Manuscript Corrections in a Copy of the Folio, 1632, in the possession of R. Payne Collier, Esq., F.S.A.* London, 1853.

steam-engine to write their books ; and if those books were really written by a man, he must have been a man who could write them , he must have had the thoughts which they express, have acquired the knowledge they contain, have possessed the style in which we read them The difficulty is a defect of the critics. A person who knows nothing of an author he has read will not know much of an author whom he has seen

First of all, it may be said that Shakespeare's works could only be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience It is often difficult to make out whether the author of a poetic creation is drawing from fancy or drawing from experience, but for art on a certain scale the two must concur Out of nothing, nothing can be created Some plastic power is required, however great may be the material And when such works as "Hamlet" and "Othello," still more, when both they and others not unequal, have been created by a single mind, it may be fairly said, that not only a great imagination but a full conversancy with the world was necessary to their production The whole powers of man under the most favourable circumstances are not too great for such an effort. We may assume that Shakespeare had a great experience.

To a great experience one thing is essential, an experiencing nature It is not enough to have opportunity, it is essential to feel it Some occasions come to all men , but to many they are of little use, and to some they are none What, for example, has experience done for the distinguished Frenchman, the name of whose essay is prefixed to this paper ? M Guizot is the same man that he was in 1820, or, we believe, as he was in 1814 Take up one of his lectures, published before he was a practical statesman , you will be struck with the width of view, the amplitude and the solidity of the reflections , you will be amazed that a mere literary teacher could produce anything so wise , but take up afterwards an essay published since his fall—and

you will be amazed to find no more. Napoleon the First is come and gone—the Bourbons of the old *régime* have come and gone—the Bourbons of the new *régime* have had their turn. M Guizot has been first minister of a citizen king ; he has led a great party , he has pronounced many a great *discours* that was well received by the second elective assembly in the world. But there is no trace of this in his writings No one would guess from them that their author had ever left the professor's chair. It is the same, we are told, with small matters when M Guizot walks the street, he seems to see nothing ; the head is thrown back, the eye fixed, and the mouth working. His mind is no doubt at work, but it is not stirred by what is external Perhaps it is the internal activity of mind that overmasters the perceptive power. Anyhow there might have been an *émeute* in the street and he would not have known it , there have been revolutions in his life, and he is scarcely the wiser Among the most frivolous and fickle of civilized nations he is alone. They pass from the game of war to the game of peace, from the game of science to the game of art, from the game of liberty to the game of slavery, from the game of slavery to the game of licence , he stands like a schoolmaster in the playground, without sport and without pleasure, firm and sullen, slow and awful

A man of this sort is a curious mental phenomenon He appears to get early—perhaps to be born with—a kind of dry schedule or catalogue of the universe , he has a ledger in his head, and has a title to which he can refer any transaction ; nothing puzzles him, nothing comes amiss to him, but he is not in the least the wiser for anything Like the book-keeper, he has his heads of account, and he knows them, but he is no wiser for the particular items. After a busy day, and after a slow day, after a few entries, and after many, his knowledge is exactly the same : take his opinion of Baron Rothschild : he will say, “ Yes, he keeps an account

with us," of Humphrey Brown: "Yes, we have that account, too." Just so with the class of minds which we are speaking of, and in greater matters. Very early in life they come to a certain and considerable acquaintance with the world; they learn very quickly all they can learn, and naturally they never, in any way, learn any more. Mr. Pitt is, in this country, the type of the character. Mr. Alison, in a well-known passage, makes it a matter of wonder that he was fit to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three, and it is a great wonder. But it is to be remembered that he was no more fit at forty-three. As somebody said, he did not grow, he was cast. Experience taught him nothing, and he did not believe that he had anything to learn. The habit of mind in smaller degrees is not very rare, and might be illustrated without end. Hazlitt tells a story of West, the painter, that is in point. When some one asked him if he had ever been to Greece, he answered: "No; I have read a descriptive catalogue of the principal objects in that country, and I believe I am as well conversant with them as if I had visited it." No doubt he was just as well conversant, and so would be any *doctrinaire*.

But Shakespeare was not a man of this sort. If he walked down a street, he knew what was in that street. His mind did not form in early life a classified list of all the objects in the universe, and learn no more about the universe ever after. From a certain fine sensibility of nature, it is plain that he took a keen interest not only in the general and coarse outlines of objects, but in their minutest particulars and gentlest gradations. You may open Shakespeare and find the clearest proofs of this; take the following

" When last the young Orlando parted from you,  
He left a promise to return again  
Within an hour, and, pacing through the forest,  
Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,

Lo, what befell ! he threw his eye aside,  
 And, mark, what object did present itself !  
 Under an oak, whose boughs were mossed with age,  
 And high top bald with dry antiquity,  
 A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,  
 Lay sleeping on his back about his neck  
 A green and gilded snake had wreath'd itself,  
 Who with her head, nimble in threats, approach'd  
 The opening of his mouth ; but suddenly  
 Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,  
 And with indented glides did slip away  
 Into a bush under which bush's shade  
 A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,  
 Lay crouching, head on ground, with cat-like watch,  
 When that the sleeping man should stir, for 'tis  
 The royal disposition of that beast  
 To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead .  
 This seen," etc , eic \*

Or the more celebrated description of the hunt .

" And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,  
 Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles,  
 How he outruns the wind, and with what care  
 He cranks and crosses, with a thousand doubles :  
 The many musits through the which he goes  
 Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,  
 To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell,  
 And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,  
 To stop the loud pursuers in their yell :  
 And sometimes sorteth with a herd of deer ,  
 Danger deviseth shifts ; wit waits on fear :

For thee his smell with others being mingled,  
 The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,  
 Ceasing their clamorous cry, till they have singled,  
 With much ado, the cold fault cleanly out ;  
 Then do they spend their mouths Echo replies  
 As if another chase were in the skies

\* " As You Like It," iv. 3

By this, poor Wat, far off, upon a hill,  
 Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,  
 To harken if his foes pursue him still,  
 Anon their loud alarums he doth hear ;  
 And now his grief may be compared well  
 To one sore sick that hears the passing bell

Then thou shalt see the dew-bedabbled wretch  
 Turn and return, indenting with the way ;  
 Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,  
 Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay :  
 For misery is trodden on by many,  
 And being low, never relieved by any " \*

It is absurd, by the way, to say we know *nothing* about the man who wrote that ; we know that he had been after a hare. It is idle to allege that mere imagination would tell him that a hare is apt to run among a flock of sheep, or that its so doing disconcerts the scent of hounds. But no single citation really represents the power of the argument. Set descriptions may be manufactured to order, and it does not follow that even the most accurate or successful of them was really the result of a thorough and habitual knowledge of the object. A man who knows little of Nature may write one excellent delineation, as a poor man may have one bright guinea. Real opulence consists in having many. What truly indicates excellent knowledge is the habit of constant, sudden, and almost unconscious allusion, which implies familiarity, for it can arise from that alone,—and this very species of incidental, casual, and perpetual reference to "the mighty world of eye and ear," † is the particular characteristic of Shakespeare.

In this respect Shakespeare had the advantage of one whom, in many points, he much resembled—Sir Walter Scott. For a great poet, the organization of the latter was very blunt, he had no sense of smell, little sense of

\* "Venus and Adonis"

† Wordsworth "Tintern Abbey"

taste, almost no ear for music (he knew a few, perhaps three, Scotch tunes, which he avowed that he had learnt in sixty years, by hard labour and mental association), and not much turn for the minutiae of Nature in any way. The effect of this may be seen in some of the best descriptive passages of his poetry, and we will not deny that it does (although proceeding from a sensuous defect), in a certain degree, add to their popularity. He deals with the main outlines and great points of Nature, never attends to any others, and in this respect he suits the comprehension and knowledge of many who know only those essential and considerable outlines. Young people, especially, who like big things, are taken with Scott, and bored by Wordsworth, who knew too much. And after all, the two poets are in proper harmony, each with his own scenery. Of all beautiful scenery the Scotch is the roughest and barest, as the English is the most complex and cultivated. What a difference is there between the minute and finished delicacy of Rydal Water and the rough simplicity of Loch Katrine! It is the beauty of civilization beside the beauty of barbarism. Scott has himself pointed out the effect of this on arts and artists.

“ Or see yon weather-beaten hind,  
Whose sluggish herds before him wind,  
Whose tattered plaid and rugged cheek  
His Northern clime and kindred speak,  
Through England’s laughing meads he goes,  
And England’s wealth around him flows,  
Ask if it would content him well,  
At ease in those gay plains to dwell,  
Where hedgerows spread a verdant screen,  
And spires and forests intervene,  
And the neat cottage peeps between?  
No, not for these would he exchange  
His dark Lochaber’s boundless range,  
Not for fair Devon’s meads forsake  
Ben Nevis grey and Garry’s lake

Thus while I ape the measures wild  
 Of tales that charmed me yet a child,  
 Rude though they be, still, with the chime,  
 Return the thoughts of early time ;  
 And feelings roused in life's first day,  
 Glow in the line and prompt the lay.  
 Then rise those crags, that mountain tower,  
 Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour.  
 Though no broad river swept along,  
 To claim perchance heroic song ,  
 Though sighed no groves in summer gale,  
 To prompt of love a softer tale ;  
 Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed  
 Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed,  
 Yet was poetic impulse given  
 By the green hill and clear blue heaven  
 It was a barren scene and wild,  
 Where naked cliffs were rudely piled,  
 But ever and anon between,  
 Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green ;  
 And well the lonely infant knew  
 Recesses where the wallflower grew,  
 And honeysuckle loved to crawl  
 Up the low crag and ruined wall

. . . . .

From me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask  
 The classic poet's well-conned task ?  
 Nay, Erskine, nay—On the wild hill  
 Let the wild heathbell flourish still ;  
 Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,  
 But freely let the woodbine twine,  
 And leave untrimmed the eglantine.  
 Nay, my friend, nay—Since oft thy praise  
 Hath given fresh vigour to my lays,  
 Since oft thy judgment could refine  
 My flattened thought or cumbrous line,  
 Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,  
 And in the minstrel spare the friend  
 Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,  
 Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale ”\*

\* “ Marmion,” Introduction to canto iii

And this is wise, for there is beauty in the North as well as in the South. Only it is to be remembered that the beauty of the Trossachs is the result of but a few elements—say birch and brushwood, rough hills and narrow dells, much heather and many stones—while the beauty of England is one thing in one district and one in another; is here the combination of one set of qualities, and there the harmony of opposite ones, and is everywhere made up of many details and delicate refinements; all which require an exquisite delicacy of perceptive organization, a seeing eye, a minutely hearing ear. Scott's is the strong admiration of a rough mind; Shakespeare's, the nice minuteness of a susceptible one.

A perfectly poetic appreciation of nature contains two elements—a knowledge of facts, and a sensibility to charms. Everybody who may have to speak to some naturalists will be well aware how widely the two may be separated. He will have seen that a man may study butterflies and forget that they are beautiful, or be perfect in the “Lunar theory” without knowing what most people mean by the moon. Generally such people prefer the stupid parts of nature—worms and Cochin-China fowls. But Shakespeare was not obtuse. The lines—

“ Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
 The winds of March with beauty, violets dim,  
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
 Or Cytherea's breath,” \*

seem to show that he knew those feelings of youth, to which beauty is more than a religion

In his mode of delineating natural objects Shakespeare is curiously opposed to Milton. The latter, who was still by temperament, and a schoolmaster by trade, selects a beautiful object, puts it straight out before

\* “A Winter's Tale,” IV 3

him and his readers, and accumulates upon it all the learned imagery of a thousand years; Shakespeare glances at it and says something of his own. It is not our intention to say that, as a describer of the external world, Milton is inferior; in *set* description we rather think that he is the better. We only wish to contrast the mode in which the delineation is effected. The one is like an artist who dashes off any number of picturesque sketches at any moment; the other like a man who has lived at Rome, has undergone a thorough training, and by deliberate and conscious effort, after a long study of the best masters, can produce a few great pictures. Milton, accordingly, as has been often remarked, is careful in the choice of his subjects; he knows too well the value of his labour to be very ready to squander it; Shakespeare, on the contrary, describes anything that comes to hand, for he is prepared for it whatever it may be, and what he paints he paints without effort. Compare any passage from Shakespeare—for example, those quoted before—and the following passage from Milton.

“ Southward through Eden went a river large,  
Nor changed its course, but through the shaggy hill  
Passed underneath ingulfed, for God had thrown  
That mountain as His garden mould, high raised  
Upon the rapid current, which through veins  
Of porous earth, with kindly thirst up-drawn,  
Rose a fresh mountain, and with many a rill  
Watered the garden, thence united fell  
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,  
Which from its darksome passage now appears,  
And now divided into four main streams  
Runs diverse, wandering many a famous realm  
And country, whereof here needs no account,  
But rather to tell how,—if art could tell,—  
How from that sapphire fount the crispèd brooks,  
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,  
With mazy error under pendent shades  
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed

Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice art  
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon  
Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,  
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote  
The open field, and where the unpierced shade  
Imbrowned the noontide bowers Thus was this place  
A happy rural seat of various view ,  
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm ;  
Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,  
Hung amiable (Hesperian fables true,  
If true, here only), and of delicious taste .  
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks  
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed  
Or palmy hillock, or the flowery lap  
Of some irriguous valley spread her store ;  
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose " \*

Why, you could draw a map of it. It is *not* " Nature boon," but " nice art in beds and curious knots " ; it is exactly the old (and excellent) style of artificial gardening, by which any place can be turned into trim hedge-rows, and stiff borders, and comfortable shades ; but there are no straight lines in Nature or Shakespeare. Perhaps the contrast may be accounted for by the way in which the two poets acquired their knowledge of scenes and scenery. We think we demonstrated before that Shakespeare was a sportsman, but if there be still a sceptic or a dissentient, let him read the following remarks on dogs .

" My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flewed, so sanded , and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,  
Crook-kneed and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls ;  
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,  
Each under each A cry more tunable  
Was never holloa'd to nor cheered with horn  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly." †

\* " *Paradise Lost*," book iv

† " *Midsummer Night's Dream*," iv , i.

“ Judge when you hear.” \* It is evident that the man who wrote this was a judge of dogs, was an out-of-door sporting man, full of natural sensibility, not defective in “ daintiness of ear,” and above all things, apt to cast on Nature random, sportive, half-boyish glances, which reveal so much, and bequeath such abiding knowledge Milton, on the contrary, went out to see Nature. He left a narrow cell, and the intense study which was his “ portion in this life,” to take a slow, careful, and reflective walk In his treatise on education he has given us his notion of the way in which young people should be familiarized with natural objects. “ But,” he remarks, “ to return to our institute; besides these constant exercises at home, there is another opportunity of gaining pleasure from pleasure itself abroad, in those vernal seasons of the year when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against Nature, not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicing in heaven and earth. I should not therefore be a persuader to them of studying much in these, after two or three years, that they have well laid their grounds, but to ride out in companies, with prudent and staid guides, to all quarters of the land; learning and observing all places of strength, all commodities of building and of soil, for towns and tillage, harbours and ports of trade Sometimes taking sea as far as our navy, to learn there also what they can in the practical knowledge of sailing and of sea-fight” Fancy “ the prudent and staid guides” What a machinery for making pedants. Perhaps Shakespeare would have known that the conversation would be in this sort. “ I say, Shallow, that mare is going in the knees She has never been the same since you larked her over the five-bar, while Moleyes was talking clay and agriculture. I do not hate Latin so much, but I hate ‘ argillaceous earth’; and what use is *that* to a

\* *Ibid*, next line.

fellow in the Guards, *I* should like to know?" Shakespeare had himself this sort of boyish buoyancy. He was not "one of the staid guides." We might further illustrate it. Yet this would be tedious enough, and we prefer to go on and show what we mean by an experiencing nature in relation to men and women, just as we have striven to indicate what it is in relation to horses and hares.

The reason why so few good books are written is that so few people that can write know anything. In general an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiments of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum. The mental habits of Robert Southey, which about a year ago were so extensively praised in the public journals, are the type of literary existence, just as the praise bestowed on them shows the admiration excited by them among literary people. He wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast. He wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the *Quarterly* afterwards; and after supper, by way of relaxation, composed the "Doctor"—a lengthy and elaborate jest. Now, what can any one think of such a life—except how clearly it shows that the habits best fitted for communicating information, formed with the best care, and daily regulated by the best motives, are exactly the habits which are likely to afford a man the least information to communicate. Southey had no events, no experiences. His wife kept house and allowed him pocket-money, just as if he had been a German professor devoted to accents, tobacco, and the dates of Horace's amours. And it is pitiable to think that so meritorious a life was only made endurable by a painful delusion. He thought that day by day, and hour by hour, he was accumulating stores for the

instruction and entertainment of a long posterity. His epics were to be in the hands of all men, and his history of Brazil, the "Herodotus of the South American Republics." As if his epics were not already dead, and as if the people who now cheat at Valparaiso care a *real* who it was that cheated those before them. Yet it was only by a conviction like this that an industrious and calligraphic man (for such was Robert Southey), who might have earned money as a clerk, worked all his days for half a clerk's wages, at occupation much duller and more laborious. The critic in *The Vicar of Wakefield* lays down that you should *always* say that the picture would have been better if the painter had taken more pains; but in the case of the practised literary man, you should often enough say that the writings would have been much better if the writer had taken less pains. He says he has devoted his life to the subject—the reply is "Then you have taken the best way to prevent your making anything of it." Instead of reading studiously what *Burgersdicius* and *Ænæsidermus* said men were, you should have gone out yourself, and seen (if you can see) what they are.

After all, the original way of writing books may turn out to be the best. The first author, it is plain, could not have taken anything from books, since there were no books for him to copy from; he looked at things for himself. Anyhow, the modern system fails, for where are the amusing books from voracious students and habitual writers? Not that we mean exactly to say that an author's hard reading is the cause of his writing that which is hard to read. This would be near the truth, but not quite the truth. The two are concomitant effects of a certain defective nature. Slow men read well, but write ill. The abstracted habit, the want of keen exterior interests, the aloofness of mind from what is next it, all tend to make a man feel an exciting curiosity and interest about remote literary events, the toil of scholastic logicians, and the

petty feuds of Argos and Lacedæmon ; but they also tend to make a man very unable to explain and elucidate those exploits for the benefit of his fellows. What separates the author from his readers, will make it proportionably difficult for him to explain himself to them. Secluded habits do not tend to eloquence ; and the indifferent apathy which is so common in studious persons is exceedingly unfavourable to the liveliness of narration and illustration which is needed for excellence in even the simpler sorts of writing. Moreover, in general it will perhaps be found that persons devoted to mere literature commonly become devoted to mere idleness. They wish to produce a great work, but they find they cannot. Having relinquished everything to devote themselves to this, they conclude on trial that this is impossible. They wish to write, but nothing occurs to them. Therefore they write nothing, and they do nothing. As has been said, they have nothing to do. Their life has no events, unless they are very poor. With any decent means of subsistence, they have nothing to rouse them from an indolent and musing dream. A merchant must meet his bills, or he is civilly dead and uncivilly remembered. But a student may know nothing of time and be too lazy to wind up his watch. In the retired citizen's journal in Addison's *Spectator* we have the type of this way of spending the time : "Mem. Morning 8 to 9, Went into the parlour and tied on my shoe-buckles" This is the sort of life for which studious men commonly relinquish the pursuits of business and the society of their fellows.

Yet all literary men are not tedious, neither are they all slow. One great example even these most tedious times have luckily given us, to show us what may be done by a really great man even now, the same who before served as an illustration—Sir Walter Scott. In his lifetime people denied he was a poet, but nobody said that he was not "the best fellow" in Scotland—perhaps that was not much—or that he had not more

wise joviality, more living talk, more graphic humour, than any man in Great Britain. "Wherever we went," said Mr. Wordsworth, "we found his name acted as an *Open sesame*, and I believe that in the character of the *sheriff's* friends we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the border country." Never neglect to talk to people with whom you are casually thrown, was his precept, and he exemplified the maxim himself. "I believe," observes his biographer, "that Scott has somewhere expressed in print his satisfaction, that amid all the changes of our manners the ancient freedom of personal intercourse may still be indulged between a master and an *out-of-door* servant, but in truth he kept by the old fashion, even with domestic servants, to an extent which I have hardly ever seen practised by any other gentleman. He conversed with his coachman if he sat by him, as he often did, on the box—with his footman, if he chanced to be in the rumble. Indeed, he did not confine his humanity to his own people, any steady-going servant of a friend of his was soon considered as a sort of friend too, and was sure to have a kind little colloquy to himself at coming or going." "Sir Walter speaks to every man as if he was his blood relation," was the expressive comment of one of these dependents. It was in this way that he acquired the great knowledge of various kinds of men, which is so clear and conspicuous in his writings; nor could that knowledge have been acquired on easier terms, or in any other way. No man could describe the character of Dandie Dinmont without having been in Liddesdale. Whatever has been once in a book may be put into a book again; but an original character, taken at first hand from the sheepwalks and from Nature, must be seen in order to be known. A man, to be able to describe—indeed, to be able to know—various people in life, must be able at sight to comprehend their essential features, to know how they shade one into another, to see how they diversify the common

uniformity of civilized life. Nor does this involve simply intellectual or even imaginative prerequisites, still less will it be facilitated by exquisite senses or subtle fancy. What is wanted is to be able to appreciate mere clay—which mere mind never will. If you will describe the people,—nay, if you will write for the people, you must be one of the people. You must have led their life, and must wish to lead their life. However strong in any poet may be the higher qualities of abstract thought or conceiving fancy, unless he can actually sympathize with those around him, he can never describe those around him. Any attempt to produce a likeness of what is not really *liked* by the person who is describing it will end in the creation of what may be correct, but is not living—of what may be artistic, but is likewise artificial.

Perhaps this is the defect of the works of the greatest dramatic genius of recent times—Goethe. His works are too much in the nature of literary studies, the mind is often deeply impressed by them, but one doubts if the author was. He saw them as he saw the houses of Weimar and the plants in the act of metamorphosis. He had a clear perception of their fixed condition and their successive transitions, but he did not really (if we may so speak) comprehend their motive power. So to say, he appreciated their life, but not their liveliness. Niebuhr, as is well known, compared the most elaborate of Goethe's works—the novel *Wilhelm Meister*—to a menagerie of tame animals, meaning thereby, as we believe, to express much the same distinction. He felt that there was a deficiency in mere vigour and rude energy. We have a long train and no engine—a great accumulation of excellent matter, arranged and ordered with masterly skill, but not animated with over-buoyant and unbounded play. And we trace this not to a defect in imaginative power, a defect which it would be a simple absurdity to impute to Goethe, but to the tone of his character and the

habits of his mind. He moved hither and thither through life, but he was always a man apart. He mixed with unnumbered kinds of men, with courts and academies, students and women, camps and artists, but everywhere he was with them, yet not of them. In every scene he was there, and he made it clear that he was there with a reserve and as a stranger. He went there to *experience*. As a man of universal culture and well skilled in the order and classification of human life, the fact of any one class or order being beyond his reach or comprehension seemed an absurdity, and it was an absurdity. He thought that he was equal to moving in any description of society, and he was equal to it, but then on that exact account he was absorbed in none. There were none of surpassing and immeasurably preponderating captivation. No scene and no subject were to him what Scotland and Scotch nature were to Sir Walter Scott. "If I did not see the heather once a year, I should die," said the latter; but Goethe would have lived without it, and it would not have cost him much trouble. In every one of Scott's novels there is always the spirit of the old moss-trooper—the flavour of the ancient border, there is the intense sympathy which enters into the most living moments of the most living characters—the lively energy which *becomes* the energy of the most vigorous persons delineated. "Marmion" was "written" while he was galloping on horseback. It reads as if it were so.

Now it appears that Shakespeare not only had that various commerce with, and experience of men, which was common both to Goethe and to Scott, but also that he agrees with the latter rather than with the former in the kind and species of that experience. He was not merely with men, but of men, he was not a "thing apart,"\* with a clear intuition of what was in those

\* Byron "Don Juan," i, cxciv.

around him ; he had in his own nature the germs and tendencies of the very elements that he described. He knew what was in man, for he felt it in himself. Throughout all his writings you see an amazing sympathy with common people, rather an excessive tendency to dwell on the common features of ordinary lives. You feel that common people could have been cut out of him, but not without his feeling it ; for it would have deprived him of a very favourite subject—of a portion of his ideas to which he habitually recurred.

*“ Leon* What would you with me, honest neighbour ?

*Dog.* Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with you, that decerns you nearly

*Leon.* Brief, I pray you, for you see 'tis a busy time with me.

*Dog* Marry, this it is, sir.

*Verg.* Yes, in truth it is, sir.

*Leon* What is it, my good friends ?

*Dog* Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter. an old man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt, as, God help, I would desire they were, but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows

*Verg* Yes, I thank God, I am as honest as any man living, that is an old man, and no honester than I

*Dog* Comparisons are odorous —*palabras*, neighbour Verges

*Leon.* Neighbours, you are tedious

*Dog* It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers ; but, truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship

• . . . .  
*Leon.* I would fain know what you have to say

*Verg* Marry, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence, have ta'en a couple of as airant knaves as any in Messina.

*Dog.* A good old man, sir, he will be talking ; as they say, When the age is in, the wit is out, God help us ! it is a world to see !—Well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges —

well, God's a good man, an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind —An honest soul, i' faith, sir, by my troth he is, as ever broke bread; but God is to be worshipped. All men are not alike; alas, good neighbour!

*Leon* Indeed, neighbour, he comes too far short of you.

*Dog* Gifts that God gives,"—etc., etc.\*

" *Stafford* Ay, sir

*Cade* By her he had two children at one birth

*Staff* That's false

*Cade.* Ay, there's the question; but, I say, 'tis true.

The elder of them, being put to nurse,

Was by a beggar-woman stol'n away:

And, ignorant of his birth and parentage,

Became a bricklayer, when he came to age;

His son am I, deny it, if you can

*Dick* Nay, 'tis too true; therefore he shall be king.

*Smith* Sir, he made a chimney in my father's house, and the bricks are alive at this day to testify it, therefore, deny it not" †

Shakespeare was too wise not to know that for most of the purposes of human life stupidity is a most valuable element. He had nothing of the impatience which sharp logical narrow minds habitually feel when they come across those who do not apprehend their quick and precise deductions. No doubt he talked to the stupid players, to the stupid doorkeeper, to the property man, who considers paste jewels "very preferable, besides the expense"—talked with the stupid apprentices of stupid Fleet Street, and had much pleasure in ascertaining what was their notion of "King Lear." In his comprehensive mind it was enough if every man hitched well into his own place in human life. If every one were logical and literary, how would there be scavengers, or watchmen, or caulkers, or coopers? Narrow minds will be "subdued to what" they "work in." The "dyer's hand" ‡ will not more clearly carry off its tint,

\* "Much Ado about Nothing," in 5.

† "2 King Henry VI," iv 2

‡ Shakespeare: "Sonnets," cxii

nor will what is moulded more precisely indicate the confines of the mould. A patient sympathy, a kindly fellow-feeling for the narrow intelligence necessarily induced by narrow circumstances—a narrowness which, in some degrees, seems to be inevitable, and is perhaps more serviceable than most things to the wise conduct of life—this, though quick and half-bred minds may despise it, seems to be a necessary constituent in the composition of manifold genius. “How shall the world be served?” asks the host in Chaucer. We must have cart-horses as well as race-horses, draymen as well as poets. It is no bad thing, after all, to be a slow man and to have one idea a year. You don’t make a figure, perhaps, in argumentative society, which requires a quicker species of thought, but is that the worse?

“*Hol. Via*, Goodman Dull, thou hast spoken no word all this while.

*Dull.* Nor understood none either, sir.

*Hol. Allons*, we will employ thee

*Dull* I’ll make one in a dance or so, or I will play on the tabor to the worthies, and let them dance the hay

*Hol* Most dull, honest Dull, to our sport away”\*

And such, we believe, was the notion of Shakespeare.

S. T. Coleridge has a nice criticism which bears on this point. He observes that in the narrations of uneducated people in Shakespeare, just as in real life, there is a want of prospectiveness and a superfluous amount of regressiveness. People of this sort are unable to look a long way in front of them, and they wander from the right path. They get on too fast with one half, and then the other hopelessly lags. They can tell a story exactly as it is told to them (as an animal can go step by step where it has been before), but they can’t calculate its bearings beforehand, or see

\* “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” v 1.

how it is to be adapted to those to whom they are speaking, nor do they know how much they have thoroughly told and how much they have not. "I went up the street, then I went down the street; no, first went down and then—but you do not follow me, I go back, you, sir" Thence arises the complex style usually adopted by persons not used to narration. They tumble into a story and get on as they can. This is scarcely the sort of thing which a man could foresee. Of course a metaphysician can account for it, and, like Coleridge, assure you that if he had not observed it, he could have predicted it in a moment; but, nevertheless, it is too refined a conclusion to be made out from known premises by common reasoning. Doubtless there is some reason why negroes have woolly hair (and if you look into a philosophical treatise you will find that the author could have made out that it would be so, if he had not, by a mysterious misfortune, known from infancy that it was the fact),—still one could never have supposed it oneself. And in the same manner, though the profounder critics may explain in a satisfactory and refined manner, how the confused and undulating style of narration is peculiarly incident to the mere multitude, yet it is most likely that Shakespeare derived his acquaintance with it from the fact, from actual hearing, and not from what may be the surer, but is the slower, process of metaphysical deduction. The best passage to illustrate this is that in which the nurse gives a statement of Juliet's age; but it will not exactly suit our pages. The following of Mrs. Quickly will suffice.

"Tilly-fally, Sir John, never tell me; your ancient swaggerer comes not in my doors. I was before Master Tizzick, the Deputy, the other day, and, as he said to me—it was no longer ago than Wednesday last,—Neighbour Quickly, says he,—Master Dumb, our minister, was by then,—Neighbour Quickly, says he, receive those that are civil, for, saith he, you are in an ill name.—now, he said so, I

can tell you whereupon, for, says he, you are an honest woman, and well thought on; therefore take heed to what guests you receive. Receive, says he, no swaggering companions.—There comes none here;—you would bless you to hear what he said.—no, I'll no swaggerers” \*

Now, it is quite impossible that this, any more than the political reasoning on the parentage of Cade, which was cited before, should have been written by one not habitually and sympathizingly conversant with the talk of the illogical classes. Shakespeare felt, if we may say so, the force of the bad reasoning. He did not, like a sharp logician, angrily detect a flaw, and set it down as a fallacy of reference or a fallacy of amphibiology. This is not the English way, though Dr. Whately's logic has been published so long (and, as he says himself, must now be deemed to be irrefutable, since no one has ever offered any refutation of it). Yet still people in this country do not like to be committed to distinct premises. They like a Chancellor of the Exchequer to say: “It has during very many years been maintained by the honourable member for Montrose that two and two make four, and I am free to say, that I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of that opinion, but, without committing her Majesty's Government to that proposition as an abstract sentiment, I will go so far as to assume two and two are not sufficient to make five, which, with the permission of the House, will be a sufficient basis for all the operations which I propose to enter upon during the present year.” We have no doubt Shakespeare reasoned in that way himself. Like any other Englishman, when he had a clear course before him, he rather liked to shuffle over little hitches in the argument, and on that account he had a great sympathy with those who did so too. He would never have interrupted Mrs Quickly; he saw that her mind was going to and fro over the subject;

\* “*2 King Henry IV*,” ii 4

he saw that it was coming right, and this was enough for him, and will be also enough of this topic for our readers

We think we have proved that Shakespeare had an enormous specific acquaintance with the common people ; that this can only be obtained by sympathy. It likewise has a further condition.

In spiritedness, the style of Shakespeare is very like to that of Scott. The description of a charge of cavalry in Scott reads, as was said before, as if it was written on horseback. A play by Shakespeare reads as if it were written in a playhouse. The great critics assure you that a theatrical audience must be kept awake, but Shakespeare knew this of his own knowledge. When you read him, you feel a sensation of motion, a conviction that there is something "up," a notion that not only is something being talked about, but also that something is being done. We do not imagine that Shakespeare owed this quality to his being a player, but rather that he became a player because he possessed this quality of mind. For after, and notwithstanding, everything which has been, or may be, said against the theatrical profession, it certainly does require from those who pursue it a certain quickness and liveliness of mind. Mimics are commonly an elastic sort of persons, and it takes a little levity of disposition to enact even the "heavy fathers." If a boy joins a company of strolling players, you may be sure that he is not a "good boy"; he may be a trifle foolish, or a thought romantic, but certainly he is not slow. And this was in truth the case with Shakespeare. They say, too, that in the beginning he was a first-rate link-boy; and the tradition is affecting, though we fear it is not quite certain. Anyhow, you feel about Shakespeare that he could have been a link-boy. In the same way you feel he may have been a player. You are sure at once that he could not have followed any sedentary kind of life. But wheresoever there was anything *acted* in earnest o

in jest, by way of mock representation or by way of serious reality, there he found matter for his mind. If anybody could have any doubt about the liveliness of Shakespeare, let them consider the character of Falstaff. When a man has created *that* without a capacity for laughter, then a blind man may succeed in describing colours. Intense animal spirits are the single sentiment (if they be a sentiment) of the entire character. If most men were to save up all the gaiety of their whole lives, it would come about to the gaiety of one speech in Falstaff. A morose man might have amassed many jokes, might have observed many details of jovial society, might have conceived a Sir John, marked by rotundity of body, but could hardly have imagined what we call his rotundity of mind. We mean that the animal spirits of Falstaff give him an easy, vague, diffusive sagacity which is peculiar to him. A morose man, Iago, for example, may know anything, and is apt to know a good deal; but what he knows is generally all in corners. He knows number 1, number 2, number 3, and so on, but there is not anything continuous, or smooth, or fluent in his knowledge. Persons conversant with the works of Hazlitt will know in a minute what we mean. Everything which he observed he seemed to observe from a certain soreness of mind; he looked at people because they offended him; he had the same vivid notion of them that a man has of objects which grate on a wound in his body. But there is nothing at all of this in Falstaff, on the contrary, everything pleases him, and everything is food for a joke. Cheerfulness and prosperity give an easy abounding sagacity of mind which nothing else does give. Prosperous people bound easily over all the surface of things which their lives present to them; very likely they keep to the surface; there are things beneath or above to which they may not penetrate or attain, but what is on any part of the surface, that they know well  
“ Lift not the painted veil which those who live call

life,"\* and they do not lift it. What is sublime or awful above, what is "sightless and drear" † beneath,—these they may not dream of. Nor is any one piece or corner of life so well impressed on them as on minds less happily constituted. It is only people who have had a tooth out that really know the dentist's waiting-room. Yet such people, for the time at least, know nothing but that and their tooth. The easy and sympathizing friend who accompanies them knows everything; hints gently at the contents of the *Times*, and would cheer you with Lord Palmerston's replies. So, on a greater scale, the man of painful experience knows but too well what has hurt him, and where and why; but the happy have a vague and rounded view of the round world, and such was the knowledge of Falstaff.

It is to be observed that these high spirits are not a mere excrescence or superficial point in an experiencing nature; on the contrary, they seem to be essential, if not to its idea or existence, at least to its exercise and employment. How are you to know people without talking to them, but how are you to talk to them without tiring yourself? A common man is exhausted in half an hour, Scott or Shakespeare could have gone on for a whole day. This is, perhaps, peculiarly necessary for a painter of English life. The basis of our national character seems to be a certain energetic humour, which may be found in full vigour in old Chaucer's time, and in great perfection in at least one of the popular writers of this age, and which is, perhaps, most easily described by the name of our greatest painter—Hogarth. It is amusing to see how entirely the efforts of critics and artists fail to naturalize in England any other sort of painting. Their efforts are fruitless; for the people painted are not English people. they may

\* Shelley: "Sonnet" (1818)

† *Ibid*

be Italians, or Greeks, or Jews, but it is quite certain that they are foreigners. We should not fancy that modern art ought to resemble the mediæval. So long as artists attempt the same class of paintings as Raphael, they will not only be inferior to Raphael, but they will never please, as they might please, the English people. What we want is what Hogarth gave us—a representation of ourselves. It may be that we are wrong, that we ought to prefer something of the old world, some scene in Rome or Athens, some tale from Carmel or Jerusalem ; but, after all, we do not. These places are, we think, abroad, and had their greatness in former times ; we wish a copy of what now exists, and of what we have seen London we know, and Manchester we know, but where are all these ? It is the same with literature, Milton excepted, and even Milton can hardly be called a popular writer ; all great English writers describe English people, and in describing them they give, as they must give, a large comic element ; and, speaking generally, this is scarcely possible, except in the case of cheerful and easy-living men. There is, no doubt, a biting satire, like that of Swift, which has for its essence misanthropy. There is the mockery of Voltaire, which is based on intellectual contempt ; but this is not our English humour—it is not that of Shakespeare and Falstaff ; ours is the humour of a man who laughs when he speaks, of flowing enjoyment, of an experiencing nature.

Yet it would be a great error if we gave anything like an exclusive prominence to this aspect of Shakespeare. Thus he appeared to those around him—in some degree they knew that he was a cheerful, and humorous, and happy man ; but of his higher gift they knew less than we. A great painter of men must (as has been said) have a faculty of conversing, but he must also have a capacity for solitude. There is much of mankind that a man can only learn from himself. Behind every man's external life, which he leads in company, there is

another which he leads alone, and which he carries with him apart. We see but one aspect of our neighbour, as we see but one side of the moon ; in either case there is also a dark half, which is unknown to us. We all come down to dinner, but each has a room to himself. And if we would study the internal lives of others, it seems essential that we should begin with our own. If we study this our *datum*, if we attain to see and feel how this influences and evolves itself in our social and (so to say) public life, then it is possible that we may find in the lives of others the same or analogous features ; and if we do not, then at least we may suspect that those who want them are deficient likewise in the secret agencies which we feel produce them in ourselves. The metaphysicians assert, that people originally picked up the idea of the existence of other people in this way. It is orthodox doctrine that a baby says : " I have a mouth, mamma has a mouth therefore I'm the same species as mamma I have a nose, papa has a nose : therefore papa is the same genus as me " But whether or not this ingenious idea really does or does not represent the actual process by which we originally obtain an acquaintance with the existence of minds analogous to our own, it gives unquestionably the process by which we obtain our notion of that part of those minds which they never exhibit consciously to others, and which only becomes predominant in secrecy and solitude and to themselves. Now, that Shakespeare has this insight into the musing life of man, as well as into his social life, is easy to prove ; take, for instance, the following passages .

" This battle fares like to the morning's war,  
When dying clouds contend with growing light ;  
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,  
Can neither call it perfect day nor night  
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea,  
Forc'd by the tide to combat with the wind ;  
Now sways it that way, like the self-same sea

Forc'd to retire by fury of the wind :  
 Sometime, the flood prevails ; and then, the wind :  
 Now, one the better , then, another best ;  
 Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,  
 Yet neither conqueror, nor conquered ;  
 So is the equal poise of this fell war.  
 Here on this molehill will I sit me down.  
 To whom God will, there be the victory !  
 For Margaret my queen, and Clifford too,  
 Have chid me from the battle ; swearing both  
 They prosper best of all when I am thence  
 Would I were dead ! if God's good will were so ;  
 For what is in this world but grief and woe ?  
 Oh God ! methinks it were a happy life,  
 To be no better than a homely swain :  
 To sit upon a hill, as I do now,  
 To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,  
 Thereby to see the minutes how they run .  
 How many make the hour full complete,  
 How many hours bring about the day,  
 How many days will finish up the year,  
 How many years a mortal man may live  
 When this is known, then to divide the time :  
 So many hours must I tend my flock ,  
 So many hours must I take my rest ;  
 So many hours must I contemplate ;  
 So many hours must I sport myself ;  
 So many days my ewes have been with young ;  
 So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean ;  
 So many years ere I shall shear the fleece ,  
 So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years,  
 Pass'd over to the end they were created,  
 Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave  
 Ah, what a life were this ! how sweet ! how lovely !  
 Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade  
 To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep  
 Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy  
 To kings, that fear their subjects' treachery ?  
 O yes, it doth ; a thousand-fold it doth.  
 And to conclude,—the shepherd's homely curds,  
 His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,  
 His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,  
 All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,

Is far beyond a prince's delicacy,  
 His viands sparkling in a golden cup,  
 His body couchèd in a curious bed,  
 When care, mistrust, and treason wait on him." \*

" A fool, a fool!—I met a fool i' the fore-  
 A motley fool!—a miserable world,—  
 As I do live by food, I met a fool;  
 Who laid him down and basled him in the sun,  
 And railed on lady Fortune in good term,  
 In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool  
 'Good-morrow, fool,' quoth I. 'No, sir,' quoth he,  
 'Call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me to torture'  
 And then he drew a dial from his poke,  
 And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,  
 Says, very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock.'  
 Thus may we see,' quoth he, 'how the world works.  
 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,  
 And after an hour more, 'twill be eleven,  
 And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripen,  
 And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,  
 And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear  
 The motley fool thus moral on the time,  
 My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,  
 That fools should be so deep-contemplative;  
 And I did laugh, sans intermission,  
 An hour by his dial" †

No slight versatility of mind and pliancy of fancy could pass at will from scenes such as these to the ward of Eastcheap and the society which heard the chimes at midnight. One of the reasons of the rarity of great imaginative works is that in very few cases is this capacity for musing solitude combined with that of observing mankind. A certain constitutional though latent melancholy is essential to such a nature. This is the exceptional characteristic in Shakespeare. All through his works you feel you are reading the popular author,

\* "3 King Henry VI.," II 5

† "As You Like It," II 7

the successful man ; but through them all there is a certain tinge of musing sadness pervading, and, as it were, softening their gaiety. Not a trace can be found of “eating cares” or narrow and mind-contracting toil, but everywhere there is, in addition to shrewd sagacity and buoyant wisdom, a refining element of chastening sensibility, which prevents sagacity from being rough, and shrewdness from becoming cold. He had an eye for either sort of life :

“ Why, let the stricken deer go weep,  
 The hart ungallèd play ;  
 For some must watch, and some must sleep,  
 Thus runs the world away ” \*

In another point also Shakespeare, as he was, must be carefully contrasted with the estimate that would be formed of him from such delineations as that of Falstaff, and that was doubtless frequently made by casual, though only by casual, frequenters of the Mermaid. It has been said that the mind of Shakespeare contained within it the mind of Scott ; it remains to be observed that it contained also the mind of Keats. For, beside the delineation of human life, and beside also the delineation of Nature, there remains also for the poet a third subject—the delineation of *fancies*. Of course these, be they what they may, are like to, and were originally borrowed from, either man or Nature—from one or from both together. We know but two things in the simple way of direct experience, and whatever else we know must be in some mode or manner compacted out of them. Yet “books are a substantial world, both pure and good,” and so are fancies too. In all countries, men have devised to themselves a whole series of half-divine creations—mythologies Greek and Roman, fairies, angels, beings who may be, for aught we know, but with whom, in the meantime, we can

\* “Hamlet,” iii 2.

attain to no conversation. The most known of these mythologies are the Greek, and what is, we suppose, the second epoch of the Gothic, the fairies ; and it so happens that Shakespeare has dealt with them both, and in a remarkable manner. We are not, indeed, of those critics who profess simple and unqualified admiration for the poem of "Venus and Adonis" It seems intrinsically, as we know it from external testimony to have been, a juvenile production, written when Shakespeare's nature might be well expected to be crude and unripened. Power is shown, and power of a remarkable kind , but it is not displayed in a manner that will please or does please the mass of men. In spite of the name of its author, the poem has never been popular—and surely this is sufficient. Nevertheless, it is remarkable as a literary exercise, and as a treatment of a singular, though unpleasant subject. The fanciful class of poems differ from others in being laid, so far as their scene goes, in a perfectly unseen world. The type of such productions is Keats's "Endymion" We mean that it is the type, not as giving the abstract perfection of this sort of art, but because it shows and embodies both its excellences and defects in a very marked and prominent manner. In that poem there are no passions and no actions, there is no art and no life ; but there is beauty, and that is meant to be enough, and to a reader of one and twenty it is enough and more What are exploits or speeches ? what is Cæsar or Coriolanus ? what is a tragedy like "Lear," or a real view of human life in any kind whatever, to people who do not know and do not care what human life is ? In early youth it is, perhaps, not true that the passions, taken generally, are particularly violent, or that the imagination is in any remarkable degree powerful ; but it is certain that the fancy (which though it be, in the last resort, but a weak stroke of that same faculty, which, when it strikes hard, we call imagination, may yet for this purpose be looked on as distinct) is particularly wakeful, and that

the gentler species of passions are more absurd than they are afterwards. And the literature of this period of human life runs naturally away from the real world ; away from the less ideal portion of it, from stocks and stones, and aunts and uncles, and rests on mere half-embodied sentiments, which in the hands of great poets assume a kind of semi-personality, and are, to the distinction between things and persons, “as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine.”\* The Sonnets of Shakespeare belong exactly to the same school of poetry. They are not the sort of verses to take any particular hold upon the mind permanently and for ever, but at a certain period they take too much. For a young man to read in the spring of the year among green fields and in gentle air they are the ideal. As First of April poetry they are perfect.

The “Midsummer Night’s Dream” is of another order. If the question were to be decided by “Venus and Adonis,” in spite of the unmeasured panegyrics of many writers, we should be obliged in equity to hold, that as a poet of mere fancy Shakespeare was much inferior to the late Mr. Keats and even to meaner men. Moreover, we should have been prepared with some refined reasonings to show that it was unlikely that a poet with so much hold on reality, in life and Nature, both in solitude and in society, should have also a similar command over *unreality* : should possess a command not only of flesh and blood, but of the imaginary entities which the self-inworking fancy brings forth—im-palpable conceptions of mere mind *quædam simulacra miris pallentia modis*,† thin ideas which come we know not whence, and are given us we know not why. But, unfortunately for this ingenious, if not profound suggestion, Shakespeare, in fact, possessed the very faculty which it tends to prove that he would not possess. He

\* Tennyson. “Locksley Hall.”

† Lucretius, i. 24

could paint Poins and Falstaff, but he excelled also in fairy legends. He had such

" Seething brains ;  
Such shaping fantasies as apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends " \*

As, for example, the idea of Puck, or Queen Mab, of Ariel, or such a passage as the following.

" *Puck* How now, spirit ! whither wander you ?  
*Fair* Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough briar,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Swifter than the moones sphere ;  
And I serve the fairy queen,  
To dew her orbs upon the green :  
The cowslips tall her pensioners be  
In their gold coats spots you see ;  
Those be rubies, fairy favours,  
In those freckles live their savours :

I must go seek some dew-drops here,  
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.  
Farewell, thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone ;  
Our queen and all our elves comé here anon

*Puck*. The king doth keep his revels here to-night ;  
Take heed the queen come not within his sight  
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,  
Because that she, as her attendant, hath  
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king ;  
She never had so sweet a changeling .  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild .  
But she, perforce, withholds the lovèd boy,  
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy,  
And now they never meet in grove, or green,  
By fountain clear, or spangled star-light sheen  
But they do square ; that all their elves, for fear,  
Creep into a coin-cups, and hide them there.

\* " *Midsummer Night's Dream*," v i.

*Fair.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
Call'd Robin Good-fellow: are you not he  
That fright the maidens of the villagery;  
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,  
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;  
And sometimes make the drink to bear no barm,  
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?  
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,  
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.  
Are not you he?

Puck                   Thou speak'st aright ;  
I am that merry wanderer of the night  
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,  
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,  
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal  
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,  
In very likeness of a roasted crab ;  
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,  
And on her wither'd dew-lap pour the ale.  
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ,  
Then slip I from beneath, down topples she,  
And tailor cries, and falls into a cough ,  
And then the whole quire hold their hips, and loffe ;  
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze and swear  
A merrier hour was never wasted there —  
But room, fairy, here comes Oberon

Probably he believed in these things. Why not? Everybody else believed in them then. They suit our climate. As the Greek mythology suits the keen Attic sky, the fairies, indistinct and half-defined, suit a land of wild mists and gentle airs. They confuse the " maidens of the villagery " ; they are the paganism of the South of England.

Can it be made out what were Shakespeare's political views? We think it certainly can, and that without

difficulty. From the English historical plays it distinctly appears that he accepted, like everybody then, the Constitution of his country. His lot was not cast in an age of political controversy, nor of reform. What was, was from of old. The Wars of the Roses had made it very evident how much room there was for the evils incident to an hereditary monarchy, for instance, those of a controverted succession, and the evils incident to an aristocracy, as want of public spirit and audacious selfishness, to arise and continue within the realm of England. Yet they had not repelled, and had barely disconcerted, our conservative ancestors. They had not become Jacobins, they did not concur—and history, except in Shakespeare, hardly does justice to them—in Jack Cade's notion that the laws should come out of his mouth, or that the Commonwealth was to be reformed by interlocutors in this scene.

"Geo I tell thee, Jack Cade the clothier means to dress the Commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap on it

*Johr* So he had need, for 'tis threadbare. Well, I say it was never a merry world in England since gentlemen came up

*Geo* O miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handycraftsmen

*Johr* The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons.

*Geo* Nay more the king's council are no good workmen

*Johr* True; and yet it is said, Labour in thy vocation, which is as much as to say, let the magistrates be labouring men, and therefore should we be magistrates

*Geo* Thou hast hit it, for there is no better sign of a hard mind than a hard hand.

*Johr* I see them! I see them!"\*

The English people did see them, and know them, and therefore have rejected them. An audience which, in *King Henry VI.*, entered into the merit of this scene, would never believe in everybody's suffrage. They would

know that there is such a thing as nonsense, and when a man has once attained to that deep conception, you may be sure of him ever after. And though it would be absurd to say that Shakespeare originated this idea, or that the disbelief in simple democracy is owing to his teaching or suggestions, yet it may, nevertheless, be truly said, that he shared in the peculiar knowledge of men—and also possessed the peculiar constitution of mind—which engender this effect. The author of "Coriolanus" never believed in a mob, and did something towards preventing anybody else from doing so. But this political idea was not exactly the strongest in Shakespeare's mind. We think he had two other stronger, or as strong. First, the feeling of loyalty to the ancient polity of this country—not because it was good, but because it existed. In his time, people no more thought of the origin of the monarchy than they did of the origin of the Mendip Hills. The one had always been there, and so had the other. God (such was the common notion) had made both, and one as much as the other. Everywhere, in that age, the common modes of political speech assumed the existence of certain utterly national institutions, and would have been worthless and nonsensical except on that assumption. This national habit appears as it ought to appear in our national dramatist. A great divine tells us that the Thirty-nine Articles are "forms of thought"; inevitable conditions of the religious understanding: in politics, "kings, lords, and commons" are, no doubt, "forms of thought," to the great majority of Englishmen; in these they live, and beyond these they never move. You can't reason on the removal (such is the notion) of the English Channel, nor St George's Channel, nor can you of the English Constitution, in like manner. It is to most of us, and to the happiest of us, a thing immutable, and such, no doubt, it was to Shakespeare, which, if any one would have proved, let him refer at random to any page of the historical English plays.

The second peculiar tenet which we ascribe to his political creed is a disbelief in the middle classes. We fear he had no opinion of traders. In this age, we know, it is held that the keeping of a shop is equivalent to a political education. Occasionally, in country villages, where the trader sells everything, he is thought to know nothing, and has no vote; but in a town where he is a householder (as, indeed, he is in the country), and sells only one thing—there we assume that he knows everything. And this assumption is, in the opinion of some observers, confirmed by the fact. Sir Walter Scott used to relate that when, after a trip to London, he returned to Tweedside, he always found the people in that district knew more of politics than the Cabinet. And so it is with the mercantile community in modern times. If you are a Chancellor of the Exchequer it is possible that you may be acquainted with finance, but if you sell figs it is certain that you will. Now we nowhere find this laid down in Shakespeare. On the contrary, you will generally find that when a "citizen" is mentioned, he generally does or says something absurd. Shakespeare had a clear perception that it is possible to bribe a class as well as an individual, and that personal obscurity is but an insecure guarantee for political disinterestedness.

" Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,  
 His private arbours and new-planted orchards  
 On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,  
 And to your heirs for ever common pleasures,  
 To walk abroad and recreate yourselves  
 Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another? " \*

He everywhere speaks in praise of a tempered and ordered and qualified polity, in which the pecuniary classes have a certain influence, but no more, and shows in every page a keen sensibility to the large views and

\* "Julius Cæsar," iii 2

high-souled energies, the gentle refinements and disinterested desires, in which those classes are likely to be especially deficient. He is particularly the poet of personal nobility, though, throughout his writings, there is a sense of freedom, just as Milton is the poet of freedom, though with an underlying reference to personal nobility ; indeed, we might well expect our two poets to combine the appreciation of a rude and generous liberty with that of a delicate and refined nobleness, since it is the union of these two elements that characterizes our society and their experience.

There are two things—good-tempered sense and ill-tempered sense. In our remarks on the character of Falstaff we hope we have made it very clear that Shakespeare had the former ; we think it nearly as certain that he possessed the latter also. An instance of this might be taken from that contempt for the perspicacity of the *bourgeoisie* which we have just been mentioning. It is within the limits of what may be called malevolent sense, to 'take extreme and habitual pleasure in remarking the foolish opinions, the narrow notions, and fallacious deductions which seem to cling to the pompous and prosperous man of business. Ask him his opinion of the currency question, and he puts "bills" and "bullion" together in a sentence, and he does not seem to care what he puts between them. But a more proper instance of (what has an odd sound) the malevolence of Shakespeare is to be found in the play of "Measure for Measure." We agree with Hazlitt that this play seems to be written, perhaps more than any other, *con amore*, and with a relish, and this seems to be the reason why, notwithstanding the unpleasant nature of its plot, and the absence of any very attractive character, it is yet one of the plays which take hold on the mind most easily and most powerfully. Now the entire character of Angelo, which is the expressive feature of the piece, is nothing but a successful embodiment of the pleasure, the malevolent pleasure,

which a warm-blooded and expansive man takes in watching the rare, the dangerous and inanimate excesses of the constrained and cold-blooded. One seems to see Shakespeare, with his bright eyes and his large lips and buoyant face, watching with a pleasant excitement the excesses of his thin-lipped and calculating creation, as though they were the excesses of a real person. It is the complete picture of a natural hypocrite, who does not consciously disguise strong impulses, but whose very passions seem of their own accord to have disguised themselves and retreated into the recesses of the character, yet only to recur even more dangerously when their proper period is expired, when the will is cheated into security by their absence, and the world (and, it may be, the "judicious person" himself) is impressed with a sure reliance in his chilling and remarkable rectitude.

It has, we believe, been doubted whether Shakespeare was a man much conversant with the intimate society of women. Of course no one denies that he possessed a great knowledge of them—a capital acquaintance with their excellences, faults, and foibles; but it has been thought that this was the result rather of imagination than of society, of creative fancy rather than of perceptive experience. Now that Shakespeare possessed, among other singular qualities, a remarkable imaginative knowledge of women is quite certain, for he was acquainted with the soliloquies of women. A woman, we suppose, like a man, must be alone, in order to speak a soliloquy. After the greatest possible intimacy and experience, it must still be imagination, or fancy at least, which tells any man what a woman thinks of herself and to herself. There will still—get as near the limits of confidence or observation as you can—be a space which must be filled up from other means. Men can only divine the truth—reserve, indeed, is a part of its charm. Seeing, therefore, that Shakespeare had done what necessarily and certainly must be done

without experience, we were in some doubt whether he might not have dispensed with it altogether. A grave reviewer cannot know these things. We thought indeed of reasoning that since the delineations of women in Shakespeare were admitted to be first-rate, it should follow,—at least there was a fair presumption,—that no means or aid had been wanting to their production, and that consequently we ought, in the absence of distinct evidence, to assume that personal intimacy as well as solitary imagination had been concerned in their production. And we meant to cite the “questions about Octavia,” which Lord Byron, who thought he had the means of knowing, declared to be “women all over.”

But all doubt was removed and all conjectures set to rest by the coming in of an ably-dressed friend from the external world, who mentioned that the language of Shakespeare’s women was essentially female language ; that there were certain points and peculiarities in the English of cultivated English women which made it a language of itself, which must be heard familiarly in order to be known. And he added, “ Except a greater use of words of Latin derivation, as was natural in an age when ladies received a learned education, a few words not now proper, a few conceits that were the fashion of the time, and there is the very same English in the women’s speeches in Shakespeare.” He quoted—

“ Think not I love him, though I ask for him ;  
'Tis but a peevish boy :—yet he talks well ;—  
But what care I for words ? yet words do well,  
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.  
It is a pretty youth :—not very pretty .—  
But, sure, he’s proud ; and yet his pride becomes him ,  
He’ll make a proper man The best thing in him  
Is his complexion ; and faster than his tongue  
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.  
He is not tall ; yet for his years he’s tall :  
His leg is but so-so : and yet 'tis well

There was a pretty redness in his lip,  
 A little riper and more lusty red  
 Than that mix'd in his cheek ; 'twas just the difference  
 Betwixt the constant red, and mingled damask.  
 There be some women, Silvius, had they mark'd him  
 In parcels as I did, would have gone near  
 To fall in love with him : but, for my part,  
 I love him not, nor hate him not ; and yet  
 I have more cause to hate him than to love him :  
 For what had he to do to chide at me ?  
 He said, my eyes were black, and my hair black,  
 And now, I am remember'd, scorn'd at me :  
 I marvel why I answer'd not again .  
 But that's all one , " \*

and the passage of Perdita's cited before about the daffodils that—

“ take  
 The winds of March with beauty , violets dim,  
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
 Or Cythara's breath ; ”

and said that these were conclusive. But we have not, ourselves, heard young ladies converse in that manner

Perhaps it is in his power of delineating women that Shakespeare contrasts most strikingly with the greatest master of the art of dialogue in antiquity—we mean Plato. It will, no doubt, be said that the delineation of women did not fall within Plato's plan, that men's life was in that age so separate and predominant that it could be delineated by itself and apart, and no doubt these remarks are very true. But what led Plato to form that plan ? What led him to select that peculiar formative aspect of life, in which the masculine element is in so high a degree superior ? We believe that he did it because he felt that he could paint that kind of scene much better than he could paint any other. If a person will consider the sort of conversation that

... I. II in the cool summer morning, when Socrates

was knocked up early to talk definitions and philosophy with Protagoras, he will feel, not only that women would fancy such dialogues to be certainly stupid, and very possibly to be without meaning, but also that the side of character which is there presented is one from which not only the feminine but even the epicene element is nearly, if not perfectly, excluded. It is the intellect surveying and delineating intellectual characteristics. We have a dialogue of thinking faculties, the character of every man is delineated by showing us, not his mode of action or feeling, but his mode of thinking, alone and by itself. The pure mind, purged of all passion and affection, strives to view and describe others in like manner; and the singularity is, that the likenesses so taken are so good,—that the accurate copying of the merely intellectual effects and indications of character gives so true and so firm an impression of the whole character,—that a daguerreotype of the mind should almost seem to be a delineation of the life. But though in the hand of a consummate artist such a way of representation may in some sense succeed in the case of men, it would certainly seem sure to fail in the case of women. The mere intellect of a woman is a mere nothing. It originates nothing, it transmits nothing, it retains nothing; it has little life of its own, and therefore it can hardly be expected to attain any vigour. Of the lofty Platonic world of the ideas, which the soul in the old doctrine was to arrive at by pure and continuous reasoning, women were never expected to know anything. Plato (though Mr. Grote denies that he was a practical man) was much too practical for that; he reserved his teaching for people whose belief was regulated and induced in some measure by abstract investigations; who had an interest in the pure and (as it were) geometrical truth itself, who had an intellectual character (apart from and accessory to their other character) capable of being viewed as a large and substantial existence, Shakespeare's being, like a

woman's, worked as a whole. He was capable of intellectual abstractedness, but commonly he was touched with the sense of earth. One thinks of him as firmly set on our coarse world of common clay, but from it he could paint the moving essence of thoughtful feeling—which is the best refinement of the best women. Imogen or Juliet would have thought little of the conversation of Gorgias.

On few subjects has more nonsense been written than on the learning of Shakespeare. In former times the established tenet was that he was acquainted with the entire range of the Greek and Latin classics, and familiarly resorted to Sophocles and Æschylus as guides and models. This creed reposed not so much on any painful or elaborate criticism of Shakespeare's plays as on one of the *a priori* assumptions permitted to the indolence of the wise old world. It was then considered clear, by all critics, that no one could write good English who could not also write bad Latin. Questioning scepticism has rejected this axiom, and refuted with contemptuous facility the slight attempt which had been made to verify this case of it from the evidence of the plays themselves. But the new school, not content with showing that Shakespeare was no formed or elaborate scholar, propounded the idea that he was quite ignorant, just as Mr. Croker "demonstrates" that Napoleon Bonaparte could scarcely write or read. The answer is, that Shakespeare wrote his plays, and that those plays show not only a very powerful, but also a very cultivated mind. A hard student Shakespeare was not, yet he was a happy and pleased reader of interesting books. He was a natural reader; when a book was dull he put it down, when it looked fascinating he took it up, and the consequence is, that he remembered and mastered what he read. Lively books, read with lively interest, leave strong and living recollections, the instructors, no doubt, say that they ought not to do so, and inculcate the necessity of dry reading. Yet the

good sense of a busy public has practically discovered that what is read easily is recollected easily, and what is read with difficulty is remembered with more. It is certain that Shakespeare read the novels of his time, for he has founded on them the stories of his plays ; he read Plutarch, for his words still live in the dialogue of the "proud Roman" plays ; and it is remarkable that Montaigne is the only philosopher that Shakespeare can be proved to have read, because he deals more than any other philosopher with the first impressions of things which exist. On the other hand, it may be doubted if Shakespeare would have perused his commentators. Certainly, he would never have read a page of this review, and we go so far as to doubt whether he would have been pleased with the admirable discourses of M. Guizot, which we ourselves, though ardent admirers of his style and ideas, still find it a little difficult to *read*, —and what would he have thought of the following speculations of an anonymous individual, whose notes have been recently published in a fine octavo by Mr. Collier, and, according to the periodical essayists, "contribute valuable suggestions to the illustration of the immortal bard" ?

‘ THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

‘ ACT I SCENE I.

“ P. 92 The reading of the subsequent line has hitherto been

‘ ‘Tis true, for you are over boots in love’ ;

but the manuscript corrector of the Folio, 1632, has changed it to

‘ ‘Tis true; *but* you are over boots in love,’

which seems more consistent with the course of the dialogue; for Proteus, remarking that Leander had been ‘more than over shoes in love,’ with Hero, Valentine answers, that Proteus was even more deeply in love than

Leander. Proteus observes of the fable of Hero and Leander—

‘ That’s a deep story of a deeper love,  
For he was more than over boots in love.’

Valentine retorts—

‘ Tis true, *but* you are over boots in love.’

*For* instead of *but* was perhaps caught by the composition from the preceding line”

It is difficult to fancy Shakespeare perusing a volume of such annotations, though we allow that we admire them ourselves. As to the controversy on his school learning, we have only to say, that though the alleged imitations of the Greek tragedians are mere nonsense, yet there is clear evidence that Shakespeare received the ordinary grammar-school education of his time, and that he had derived from the pain and suffering of several years, not exactly an acquaintance with Greek or Latin, but, like Eton boys, a firm conviction that there are such languages.

Another controversy has been raised as to whether Shakespeare was religious. In the old editions it is commonly enough laid down that, when writing his plays, he had no desire to fill the Globe Theatre, but that his intentions were of the following description. “ In this play,” “ *Cymbeline*,” “ Shakespeare has strongly depicted the frailties of our nature, and the effect of vicious passions on the human mind. In the fate of the Queen we behold the adept in perfidy justly sacrificed by the arts she had, with unnatural ambition, prepared for others; and in reviewing her death and that of Cloten we may easily call to mind the words of Scripture,” etc. And of “ *King Lear*” it is observed with great confidence that Shakespeare, “ *no doubt*, intended to mark particularly the afflicting character of children’s ingratitude to their parents, and the conduct

of Goneril and Regan to each other ; *especially* in the former's poisoning the latter, and laying hands on *herself*, we are taught that those who want gratitude towards their parents (who gave them their being, fed them, nurtured them to *man's* estate) will not scruple to commit more barbarous crimes, and easily to forget that, by destroying their body, they destroy their soul also." And Dr. Ulrici, a very learned and illegible writer, has discovered that in every one of his plays Shakespeare had in view the inculcation of the peculiar sentiments and doctrines of the Christian religion, and considers the " *Midsummer Night's Dream* " to be a specimen of the lay or amateur sermon. This is what Dr. Ulrici thinks of Shakespeare ; but what would Shakespeare have thought of Dr. Ulrici ? We believe that " *Via, goodman Dull,*" is nearly the remark which the learned professor would have received from the poet to whom his very careful treatise is devoted. And yet, without prying into the Teutonic mysteries, a gentleman of missionary aptitudes might be tempted to remark that in many points Shakespeare is qualified to administer a rebuke to people of the prevalent religion. Meeting a certain religionist is like striking the corner of a wall. He is possessed of a firm and rigid persuasion that you must leave off this and that, stop, cry, be anxious, be advised, and, above all things, refrain from doing what you like, for nothing is so bad for any one as that. And in quite another quarter of the religious hemisphere we occasionally encounter gentlemen who have most likely studied at the feet of Dr. Ulrici, or at least of an equivalent Gamaliel, and who, when we, or such as we, speaking the language of mortality, remark of a pleasing friend . " *Nice fellow, so and so ! Good fellow as ever lived !* " reply sternly, upon an unsuspecting reviewer, with— " *Sir, is he an earnest man ?* " To which, in some cases, we are unable to return a sufficient answer. Yet Shakespeare, differing, in that respect at least, from the disciples of Carlyle, had, we

suspect, an objection to grim people, and we fear would have liked the society of Mercutio better than that of a dreary divine, and preferred Ophelia or "that Juliet" to a female philanthropist of sinewy aspect. And, seriously, if this world is not all evil, he who has understood and painted it best must probably have some good. If the underlying and almighty essence of this world be good, then it is likely that the writer who most deeply approached to that essence will be himself good. There is a religion of week-days as well as of Sundays, of "cakes and ale" \* as well as of pews and altar-cloths. This England lay before Shakespeare as it lies before us all, with its green fields, and its long hedgerows, and its many trees, and its great towns, and its endless hamlets, and its motley society, and its long history, and its bold exploits, and its gathering power, and he saw that they were good. To him, perhaps, more than to any one else, has it been given to see that they were a great unity, a great religious object; that if you could only descend to the inner life, to the deep things, to the secret principles of its noble vigour, to the essence of character, to what we know of Hamlet and seem to fancy of Ophelia, we might, so far as we are capable of so doing, understand the nature which God has made. Let us, then, think of him not as a teacher of dry dogmas, or a sayer of hard sayings, but as—

"A priest to us all,  
Of the wonder and bloom of the world"—†

a teacher of the hearts of men and women, one from whom may be learned something of that inmost principle that ever modulates—

"With murmurs of the air,  
And motions of the forests and the sea,

---

\* "Twelfth Night," III. 2

† Matthew Arnold: "The Youth of Nature"

And voice of living beings, and woven hymns,  
Of night and day and the deep heart of man.” \*

We must pause, lest our readers reject us, as the Bishop of Durham the poor curate, because he was “mystical and confused.”

Yet it must be allowed that Shakespeare was worldly, and the proof of it is, that he succeeded in the world. Possibly this is the point on which we are most richly indebted to tradition. We see generally, indeed, in Shakespeare’s works the popular author, the successful dramatist; there is a life and play in his writings rarely to be found, except in those who have had habitual good luck, and who, by the tact of experience, feel the minds of their readers at every word, as a good rider feels the mouth of his horse. But it would have been difficult quite to make out whether the profits so accruing had been profitably invested—whether the genius to create such illusions was accompanied with the care and judgment necessary to put out their proceeds properly in actual life. We could only have said that there was a general impression of entire calmness and equability in his principal works, rarely to be found where there is much pain, which usually makes gaps in the work and dislocates the balance of the mind. But happily here, and here almost alone, we are on sure historical ground. The reverential nature of Englishmen has carefully preserved what they thought the great excellence of their poet—that he made a fortune †. It is certain that Shakespeare was proprietor of the Globe

\* Shelley. “Alastor”

† The only antiquarian thing which can be fairly called an anecdote of Shakespeare is, that Mrs Alleyne, a shrewd woman in those times, and married to Mr. Alleyne, the founder of Dulwich Hospital, was one day, in the absence of her husband, applied to on some matter by a player who gave a reference to Mr Hemmings (the “notorious” Mr Hemmings, the commentators say) and to Mr Shakespeare of the Globe, and that the latter, when referred to, said “Yes, certainly, he knew him, and he was a rascal and good-for-nothing” The proper speech of a substantial man, such as it is worth while to give a reference to

Theatre—that he made money there, and invested the same in land at Stratford-on-Avon, and probably no circumstance in his life ever gave him so much pleasure. It was a great thing that he, the son of the wool-comber, the poacher, the good-for-nothing, the vagabond (for so we fear the phrase went in Shakespeare's youth), should return upon the old scene a substantial man, a person of capital, a freeholder, a gentleman to be respected, and over whom even a burgess could not affect the least superiority. The great pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do. Why did Mr Disraeli take the duties of the Exchequer with so much relish? Because people said he was a novelist, an *ad captandum* man, and—*monstrum horrendum*!—a Jew, that could not add up. No doubt it pleased his inmost soul to do the work of the red-tape people better than those who could do nothing else. And so with Shakespeare: it pleased him to be respected by those whom he had respected with boyish reverence, but who had rejected the imaginative man—on their own ground and in their own subject, by the only title which they would regard—in a word, as a moneyed man. We seem to see him eyeing the burgesses with good-humoured fellowship and genial (though suppressed and half-unconscious) contempt, drawing out their old stories, and acquiescing in their foolish notions, with everything in his head and easy sayings upon his tongue,—a full mind and a deep dark eye, that played upon an easy scene—now in fanciful solitude, now in cheerful society, now occupied with deep thoughts, now, and equally so, with trivial recreations, forgetting the dramatist in the man of substance, and the poet in the happy companion, beloved and even respected, with a hope for every one and a smile for all.

## EDWARD GIBBON \*

(1856)

A WIT said of Gibbon's autobiography that he did not know the difference between himself and the Roman Empire. He has narrated his "progressions from London to Buriton, and from Buriton to London," in the same monotonous majestic periods that record the fall of states and empires. The consequence is, that a fascinating book gives but a vague idea of its subject. It may not be without its use to attempt a description of him in plainer though less splendid English.

The diligence of their descendant accumulated many particulars of the remote annals of the Gibbon family; but its real founder was the grandfather of the historian, who lived in the times of the "South Sea." He was a capital man of business according to the custom of that age—a dealer in many kinds of merchandise—like perhaps the "complete tradesman" of Defoe, who was to understand the price and quality of *all* articles made within the kingdom. The preference, however, of Edward Gibbon the grandfather was for the article "shares", his genius, like that of Mr. Hudson, had a natural tendency towards a commerce in the metaphysical and non-existent, and he was fortunate in the age on which his lot was thrown. It afforded many

\* *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* By Edward Gibbon, Esq. With Notes by Dean Milman and M. Guizot Edited, with additional Notes, by William Smith, LL D In Eight Volumes London, 1855 Murray.

opportunities of gratifying that taste. Much has been written on panics and manias—much more than with the most outstretched intellect we are able to follow or conceive, but one thing is certain, that at particular times a great many stupid people have a great deal of stupid money. Saving people have often only the faculty of saving; they accumulate ably, and contemplate their accumulations with approbation; but what to do with them they do not know. Aristotle, who was not in trade, imagined that money is barren; and barren it is to quiet ladies, rural clergymen, and country misers. Several economists have plans for preventing improvident speculation; one would abolish Peel's Act, and substitute one-pound notes; another would retain Peel's Act, and make the calling for one-pound notes a capital crime; but our scheme is, not to allow any man to have a hundred pounds who cannot prove to the satisfaction of the Lord Chancellor that he knows what to do with a hundred pounds. The want of this easy precaution allows the accumulation of wealth in the hands of rectors, authors, grandmothers, who have no knowledge of business, and no idea except that their money now produces nothing, and ought and must be forced immediately to produce something. "I wish," said one of this class, "for the largest immediate income, and I am therefore naturally disposed to purchase an *advowson*." At intervals, from causes which are not to the present purpose, the money of these people—the blind capital (as we call it) of the country—is particularly large and craving; it seeks for some one to devour it, and there is "plethora"—it finds some one, and there is "speculation"—it is devoured, and there is "panic." The age of Mr. Gibbon was one of these. The interest of money was very low, perhaps under three per cent. The usual consequence followed; able men started wonderful undertakings, the ablest of all, a company "for carrying on an undertaking of great importance, but no one to know what it was."

Mr. Gibbon was not idle. According to the narrative of his grandson, he already filled a considerable position, was worth sixty thousand pounds, and had great influence both in Parliament and in the City. He applied himself to the greatest bubble of all—one so great that it is spoken of in many books as the cause and parent of all contemporary bubbles—the South-Sea Company—the design of which was to reduce the interest on the National Debt, which, oddly enough, it did reduce, and to trade exclusively to the South Sea or Spanish America, where of course it hardly did trade. Mr. Gibbon became a director, sold and bought, traded and prospered; and was considered, perhaps with truth, to have obtained much money. The bubble was essentially a fashionable one. Public intelligence and the quickness of communication did not then as now at once spread pecuniary information and misinformation to secluded districts; but fine ladies, men of fashion—the London world—ever anxious to make as much of its money as it can, and then wholly unwise (it is not now very wise) in discovering how the most *was* to be made of it—“went in” and speculated largely. As usual, all was favourable as long as the shares were rising; the price was at one time very high, and the agitation very general, it was, in a word, the railway mania in the South Sea. After a time, the shares “hesitated,” declined, and fell; and there was an outcry against everybody concerned in the matter, very like the outcry against the *oi περὶ* Hudson in our own time. The results, however, were very different. Whatever may be said, and, judging from the late experience, a good deal is likely to be said, as to the advantages of civilization and education, it seems certain that they tend to diminish a simple-minded energy. The Parliament of 1720 did not, like the Parliament of 1847, allow itself to be bored and incommoded by legal minutiae, nor did it forgo the use of plain words. A committee reported the discovery of “a train of the

deepest villainy and fraud *hell* ever contrived to ruin a nation", the directors of the company were arrested, and Mr Gibbon among the rest, he was compelled to give in a list of his effects: the general wish was that a retrospective Act should be immediately passed, which would impose on him penalties something like, or even more severe than, those now enforced on Paul and Strahan. In the end, however Mr Gibbon escaped with a parliamentary conversation upon his affairs. His estate amounted to £140,000; and as this was a great sum, there was an obvious suspicion that he was a great criminal. The scene must have been very curious.

"Allowances of twenty pounds or one shilling were facetiously voted. A vague report that a director had formerly been concerned in another project by which some unknown persons had lost their money was admitted as a proof of his actual guilt. One man was ruined because he had dropped a foolish speech that his horses should feed upon gold, another because he was grown so proud, that one day, at the Treasury, he had refused a civil answer to persons far above him." The vanity of his descendant is evidently a little tried by the peculiar severity with which his grandfather was treated. Out of his £140,000 it was proposed that he should retain only £15,000, and on an amendment even this was reduced to £10,000. Yet there is some ground for believing that the acute energy and practised pecuniary power which had been successful in obtaining so large a fortune were likewise applied with science to the inferior task of retaining some of it. The historian indeed says "On these ruins," the £10,000 aforesaid, "with skill and credit of which Parliament had not been able to deprive him, my grandfather erected the edifice of a new fortune the labours of sixteen years were amply rewarded, and I have reason to believe that the second structure was not much inferior to the first." But this only shows how far a family feeling may bias a sceptical judgment. The

credit of a man in Mr. Gibbon's position could not be very lucrative ; and his skill must have been enormous to have obtained so much at the end of his life, in such circumstances, in so few years. Had he been an early Christian, the narrative of his descendant would have contained an insidious hint, " that pecuniary property *may* be so secreted as to defy the awkward approaches of political investigation " That he died rich is certain, for two generations lived solely on the property he bequeathed.

The son of this great speculator, the historian's father, was a man to spend a fortune quietly He is not related to have indulged in any particular expense, and nothing is more difficult to follow than the pecuniary fortunes of deceased families, but one thing is certain, that the property which descended to the historian—making every allowance for all minor and subsidiary modes of diminution, such as daughter's settlements, legacies, and so forth—was enormously less than £140,000 ; and therefore if those figures are correct, the second generation must have made itself very happy out of the savings of the past generation, and without caring for the poverty of the next Nothing that is related of the historian's father indicates a strong judgment or an acute discrimination, and there are some scarcely dubious signs of a rather weak character.

Edward Gibbon, the great, was born on the 27th of April 1737. Of his mother we hear scarcely anything ; and what we do hear is not remarkably favourable. It seems that she was a faint, inoffensive woman, of ordinary capacity, who left a very slight trace of her influence on the character of her son, did little, and died early. The real mother, as he is careful to explain, of his understanding and education was her sister, and his aunt, *Mrs.* Catherine Porten, according to the speech of that age, a maiden lady of much vigour and capacity, and for whom her pupil really seems to have felt as much affection as was consistent with a rather

easy and cool nature. There is a panegyric on her in the *Memoirs*; and in a long letter upon the occasion of her death, he deposes: "To her care I am indebted in earliest infancy for the preservation of my life and health. . . . To her instructions I owe the first rudiments of knowledge, the first exercise of reason, and a taste for books, which is still the pleasure and glory of my life; and though she taught me neither language nor science, she was certainly the most useful preceptress I ever had. As I grew up, an intercourse of thirty years endeared her to me as the faithful friend and the agreeable companion. You have observed with what freedom and confidence we lived," etc., etc. To a less sentimental mind, which takes a more tranquil view of aunts and relatives, it is satisfactory to find that somehow he could not write to her. "I wish," he continues, "I had as much to applaud and as little to reproach in my conduct to Mrs Porten since I left England; and when I reflect that my letter would have soothed and comforted her decline, I feel"—what an ardent nephew would naturally feel at so unprecedented an event. Leaving his maturer years out of the question—a possible rhapsody of affectionate eloquence—she seems to have been of the greatest use to him in infancy. His health was very imperfect. We hear much of rheumatism, and lameness, and weakness; and he was unable to join in work and play with ordinary boys. He was moved from one school to another, never staying anywhere very long, and owing what knowledge he obtained rather to a strong retentive understanding than to any external stimulants or instruction. At one place he gained an acquaintance with the Latin elements at the price of "many tears and some blood." At last he was consigned to the instruction of an elegant clergyman, the Rev Philip Francis, who had obtained notoriety by a metrical translation of Horace, the laxity of which is even yet complained of by construing schoolboys, and who, with

a somewhat Horatian taste, went to London as often as he could, and translated *invisa negotia* as "boys to beat"

In school-work, therefore, Gibbon had uncommon difficulties and unusual deficiencies, but these were much more than counterbalanced by a habit which often accompanies a sickly childhood, and is the commencement of a studious life, the habit of desultory reading. The instructiveness of this is sometimes not comprehended. S. T. Coleridge used to say that he felt a great superiority over those who had not read—and fondly read—fairy tales in their childhood, he thought they wanted a sense which he possessed, the perception, or apperception—we do not know which he used to say it was—of the unity and wholeness of the universe. As to fairy tales, this is a hard saying, but as to desultory reading, it is certainly true. Some people have known a time in life when there was no book they could not read. The fact of its being a book went immensely in its favour. In early life there is an opinion that the obvious thing to do with a horse is to ride it; with a cake, to eat it; with sixpence, to spend it. A few boys carry this further, and think the natural thing to do with a book is to read it. There is an argument from design in the subject: if the book was not meant for that purpose, for what purpose was it meant? Of course, of any understanding of the works so perused there is no question or idea. There is a legend of Bentham, in his earliest childhood, climbing to the height of a huge stool and sitting there evening after evening with two candles engaged in the perusal of Rapin's history. It might as well have been any other book. The doctrine of utility had not then dawned on its immortal teacher, *cui bono* was an idea unknown to him. He would have been ready to read about Egypt, about Spain, about coals in Borneo, the teak-wood in India, the current in the river Mississippi, on natural history or human history, on theology or morals, on the state of the dark

ages or the state of the light ages, on Augustulus or Lord Chatham, on the first century or the seventeenth, on the moon, the millennium, or the whole duty of man. Just then, reading is an end in itself. At that time of life you no more think of a future consequence, of the remote, the very remote possibility of deriving knowledge from the perusal of a book, than you expect so great a result from spinning a peg-top. You spin the top, and you read the book, and these scenes of life are exhausted. In such studies, of all prose perhaps the best is history. One page is so like another; battle No. 1 is so much on a par with battle No. 2. Truth may be, as they say, stranger than fiction, abstractedly; but in actual books, novels are certainly older and more astounding than correct history. It will be said, what is the use of this? Why not leave the reading of great books till a great age? Why plague and perplex childhood with complex facts remote from its experience and inapprehensible by its imagination? The reply is, that though in all great and combined facts there is much which childhood cannot thoroughly imagine, there is also in very many a great deal which can only be truly apprehended for the first time at that age. Catch an American of thirty;—tell him about the battle of Marathon; what will he be able to comprehend of all that you mean by it; of all that halo which early impression and years of remembrance have cast around it? He may add up the killed and wounded, estimate the missing, and take the dimensions of Greece and Athens; but he will not seem to care much. He may say, “Well, sir, perhaps it was a smart thing in that small territory; but it is a long time ago, and in my country James K. Burnup”—did that which he will at length explain to you. Or try an experiment on yourself. Read the account of a Circassian victory, equal in numbers, in daring, in romance, to the old battle. Will you be able to feel about it at all in the same way? It is impossible. You cannot form

a new set of associations, your mind is involved in pressing facts, your memory choked by a thousand details; the liveliness of fancy is gone with the childhood by which it was enlivened. Schamyl will never seem as great as Leonidas, or Miltiades; Cnokemof, or whoever the Russian is, cannot be so imposing as Xerxes; the unpronounceable place cannot strike on your heart like Marathon or Platæa. Moreover, there is the further advantage which Coleridge shadowed forth in the remark we cited. Youth has a principle of consolidation. We begin with the whole. Small sciences are the labours of our manhood; but the round universe is the plaything of the boy. His fresh mind shoots out vaguely and crudely into the infinite and eternal. Nothing is hid from the depth of it; there are no boundaries to its vague and wandering vision. Early science, it has been said, begins in utter nonsense; it would be truer to say that it starts with boyish fancies. How absurd seem the notions of the first Greeks! Who could believe now that air or water was the principle, the pervading substance, the eternal material of all things? Such affairs will never explain a thick rock. And what a white original for a green and sky-blue world! Yet people disputed in those ages not whether it was either of those substances, but which of them it was. And doubtless there was a great deal, at least in quantity, to be said on both sides. Boys are improved; but some in our own day have asked, "Mamma, I say, what did God make the world of?" and several, who did not venture on speech, have had an idea of some one grey primitive thing, felt a difficulty as to how the red came, and wondered that marble could *ever* have been the same as moonshine. This is in truth the picture of life. We begin with the infinite and eternal, which we shall never apprehend, and these form a framework, a schedule, a set of co-ordinates to which we refer all which we learn later. At first, like the old Greek, "we look up to the whole sky, and are lost in the one and

the all"; in the end we classify and enumerate, learn each star, calculate distances, draw cramped diagrams on the unbounded sky, write a paper on a Cygni and a treatise on a Draconis, map special facts upon the indefinite void, and engrave precise details on the infinite and everlasting. So in history; somehow the whole comes in boyhood; the details later and in manhood. The wonderful series going far back to the times of old patriarchs with their flocks and herds, the keen-eyed Greek, the stately Roman, the watching Jew, the uncouth Goth, the horrid Hun, the settled picture of the unchanging East, the restless shifting of the rapid West, the rise of the cold and classical civilization, its fall, the rough impetuous Middle Ages, the vague warm picture of ourselves and home,—when did we learn these? Not yesterday nor to-day, but long ago, in the first dawn of reason, in the original flow of fancy. What we learn afterwards are but the accurate littlenesses of the great topic, the dates and tedious facts. Those who begin late learn only these; but the happy first feel the mystic associations and the progress of the whole.

There is no better illustration of all this than Gibbon. Few have begun early with a more desultory reading, and fewer still have described it so skilfully. "From the ancient I leaped to the modern world; many crude lumps of Speed, Rapin, Mezeray, Davila, Machiavel, Father Paul, Bower, etc., I devoured like so many novels, and I swallowed with the same voracious appetite the description of India and China, of Mexico and Peru. My first introduction to the historic scenes which have since engaged so many years of my life must be ascribed to an accident. In the summer of 1751 I accompanied my father on a visit to Mr. Hoare's, in Wiltshire, but I was less delighted with the beauties of Stourhead than with discovering in the library a common book, the *Continuation of Echard's Roman History*, which is, indeed, executed with more skill and taste than the previous work. To me the reigns of the

successors of Constantine were absolutely new ; and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast. This transient glance served rather to irritate than to appease my curiosity ; and as soon as I returned to Bath I procured the second and third volumes of Howel's *History of the World*, which exhibit the Byzantine period on a larger scale. Mahomet and his Saracens soon fixed my attention ; and some instinct of criticism directed me to the genuine sources Simon Ockley, an original in every sense, first opened my eyes ; and I was led from one book to another till I had ranged round the circle of Oriental history. Before I was sixteen I had exhausted all that could be learned in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks ; and the same ardour urged me to guess at the French of D'Herbelot, and to construe the barbarous Latin of Pocock's *Abulfaragius*." To this day the schoolboy student of the *Decline and Fall* feels the traces of that schoolboy reading. Once, he is conscious, the author like him felt, and solely felt, the magnificent progress of the great story and the scenic aspect of marvellous events.

A more sudden effect was at hand. However exalted may seem the praises which we have given to loose and unplanned reading, we are not saying that it is the sole ingredient of a good education. Besides this sort of education, which some boys will voluntarily and naturally give themselves, there needs, of course, another and more rigorous kind, which must be impressed upon them from without. The terrible difficulty of early life—the use of pastors and masters—really is, that they compel boys to a distinct mastery of that which they do not wish to learn. There is nothing to be said for a preceptor who is not dry. Mr Carlyle describes with bitter satire the fate of one of his heroes who was obliged to acquire whole systems of informa-

tion in which he, the hero, saw no use, and which he kept as far as might be in a vacant corner of his mind. And this is the very point—dry language, tedious mathematics, a thumbed grammar, a detested slate, form gradually an interior separate intellect, exact in its information, rigid in its requirements, disciplined in its exercises. The two grow together, the early natural fancy touching the far extremities of the universe, lightly playing with the scheme of all things; the precise, compacted memory slowly accumulating special facts, exact habits, clear and painful conceptions. At last, as it were in a moment, the clouds break up, the division sweeps away, we find that in fact these exercises which puzzled us, these languages which we hated, these details which we despised, are the instruments of true thought, are the very keys and openings, the exclusive access to the knowledge which we loved.

In this second education the childhood of Gibbon had been very defective. He had never been placed under any rigid training. In his first boyhood he had disputed with his aunt, "that were I master of Greek and Latin, I must interpret to myself in English the thoughts of the original, and that such extemporary versions must be inferior to the elaborate translation of professed scholars: a silly sophism," as he remarks, "which could not easily be confuted by a person ignorant of any other language than her own." Ill-health, a not very wise father, an ill-chosen succession of schools and pedagogues, prevented his acquiring exact knowledge in the regular subjects of study. His own description is the best—"erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and ignorance of which a schoolboy should have been ashamed." The amiable Mr. Francis, who was to have repaired the deficiency, went to London, and forgot him. With an impulse of discontent his father took a resolution, and sent him to Oxford at sixteen.

It is probable that a worse place could not have been

found. The University of Oxford was at the nadir of her history and efficiency. The public professorial training of the Middle Ages had died away, and the intramural collegiate system of the present time had not begun. The University had ceased to be a teaching body, and had not yet become an examining body. "The professors," says Adam Smith, who had studied there, "have given up almost the pretence of lecturing." "The examination," said a great judge\* some years later, "was a farce in my time. I was asked who founded University College, and I said, though the fact is now doubted, that King Alfred founded it; and that was the examination" The colleges, deprived of the superintendence and watchfulness of their natural sovereign, fell, as Gibbon remarks, into "port and prejudice." The Fellows were a close corporation, they were chosen from every conceivable motive—because they were respectable men, because they were good fellows, because they were brothers of other Fellows, because their fathers had patronage in the Church. Men so appointed could not be expected to be very diligent in the instruction of youth; many colleges did not even profess it, that of All Souls has continued down to our own time to deny that it has anything to do with it. Undoubtedly a person who came thither accurately and rigidly drilled in technical scholarship found many means and a few motives to pursue it. Some tutorial system probably existed at most colleges. Learning was not wholly useless in the Church. The English gentleman has ever loved a nice and classical scholarship. But these advantages were open only to persons who had received a very strict training, and who were voluntarily disposed to discipline themselves still more. To the mass of mankind the University was a "graduating machine", the colleges, monopolist residences,—hotels without bells.

Taking the place as it stood, the lot of Gibbon may be thought rather fortunate. He was placed at Magdalen, whose fascinating walks, so beautiful in the later autumn, still recall the name of Addison, the example of the merits, as Gibbon is of the deficiencies, of Oxford. His first tutor was, in his own opinion, "one of the best of the tribe" "Dr. Waldegrave was a learned and pious man, of a mild disposition, strict morals, and abstemious life, who seldom mingled in the politics or the jollity of the college. But his knowledge of the world was confined to the University ; his learning was of the last, rather than of the present age ; his temper was indolent, his faculties, which were not of the first rate, had been relaxed by the climate ; and he was satisfied, like his fellows, with the slight and superficial discharge of an important trust. As soon as my tutor had sounded the insufficiency of his disciple in school-learning, he proposed that we should read every morning, from ten to eleven, the comedies of Terence. The sum of my improvement in the University of Oxford is confined to three or four Latin plays ; and even the study of an elegant classic, which might have been illustrated by a comparison of ancient and modern theatres, was reduced to a dry and literal interpretation of the author's text. During the first weeks I constantly attended these lessons in my tutor's room ; but as they appeared equally devoid of profit and pleasure, I was once tempted to try the experiment of a formal apology. The apology was accepted with a smile. I repeated the offence with less ceremony ; the excuse was admitted with the same indulgence : the slightest motive of laziness or indisposition, the most trifling avocation at home or abroad, was allowed as a worthy impediment ; nor did my tutor appear conscious of my absence or neglect. Had the hour of lecture been constantly filled, a single hour was a small portion of my academic lecture. No plan of study was recommended for my use, no exercises were prescribed for his inspection ;

and at the most precious season of youth whole days and weeks were suffered to elapse without labour or amusement, without advice or account." The name of his second tutor is concealed in asterisks, and the sensitive conscience of Dean Milman will not allow him to insert a name "which *Gibbon* thought proper to suppress." The account, however, of the anonymous person is sufficiently graphic. "Dr. \* \* \* well remembered that he had a salary to receive, and only forgot that he had a duty to perform. Instead of guiding the studies and watching over the behaviour of his disciple, I was never summoned to attend even the ceremony of a lecture; and excepting one voluntary visit to his rooms, during the eight months of his titular office the tutor and pupil lived in the same college as strangers to each other." It added to the evils of this neglect, that Gibbon was much younger than most of the students; and that his temper, which was through life reserved, was then very shy. His appearance, too, was odd; "a thin little figure, with a large head, disputing and arguing with the greatest ability" Of course he was a joke among undergraduates; he consulted his tutor as to studying Arabic, and was seen buying *La Bibliothèque Orientale d'Herbelot*, and immediately a legend was diffused that he had turned Mahomedan. The random cast was not so far from the mark: cut off by peculiarities from the society of young people; deprived of regular tuition and systematic employment; tumbling about among crude masses of heterogeneous knowledge; alone with the heated brain of youth,—he did what an experienced man would expect—he framed a theory of all things. No doubt it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world Was he to be the butt of ungenial wine-parties, or spend his lonely hours on shreds of languages? Was he not to know the *truth*? There were the old problems, the everlasting difficulties, the *mœnia mundi*, the Hercules' pillars of the human imagination—"fate, free-will, fore-

knowledge absolute." <sup>1</sup> Surely these should come first; when we had learned the great landmarks, understood the guiding-stars, we might amuse ourselves with small points, and make a plaything of curious information. What particular theory the mind frames when in this state is a good deal matter of special accident. The data for considering these difficulties are not within its reach. Whether man be or be not born to solve the "mystery of the knowable," he certainly is not born to solve it at seventeen, with the first hot rush of the untrained mind. The selection of Gibbon was remarkable: he became a Roman Catholic.

It seems now so natural that an Oxford man should take this step, that one can hardly understand the astonishment it created. Lord Sheffield tells us that the Privy Council interfered; and with good administrative judgment examined a London bookseller—some Mr. Lewis—who had no concern in it. In the manor-house of Buriton it would have probably created less sensation if "dear Edward" had announced his intention of becoming a monkey. The English had ever believed that the Papist is a kind of *creature*; and every sound mind would prefer a beloved child to produce a tail, a hide of hair, and a taste for nuts, in comparison with transubstantiation, wax candles, and a belief in the glories of Mary.

What exact motives impelled Gibbon to this step cannot now be certainly known; the autobiography casts a mist over them, but from what appears, his conversion partly much resembled, and partly altogether differed from, the Oxford conversions of our own time. We hear nothing of the notes of a Church, or the sin of the Reformation, and Gibbon had not an opportunity of even rejecting Mr. Sewell's <sup>†</sup> theory that it is "a holy obligation to acquiesce in the opinions of your grandmother." His memoirs have a halo of great

\* "Paradise Lost," book ii

† Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford.

names—Bossuet, the *History of Protestant Variations*, etc., etc.—and he speaks with becoming dignity of falling by a noble hand. He mentioned also to Lord Sheffield as having had a preponderating influence over him, the works of Father Parsons, who lived in Queen Elizabeth's time. But in all probability these were secondary persuasions, justifications after the event. No young man, or scarcely any young man of seventeen, was ever converted by a systematic treatise, especially if written in another age, wearing an obsolete look, speaking a language which scarcely seems that of this world. There is an unconscious reasoning: “The world has had this book before it so long, and has withstood it. There must be something wrong; it seems all right on the surface, but a flaw there must be.” The mass of the volumes, too, is unfavourable. “All the treatises in the world,” says the young convert in *Loss and Gain*,\* “are not equal to giving one a view in a moment.” What the youthful mind requires is this short decisive argument, this view in a moment, this flash as it were of the understanding, which settles all, and diffuses a conclusive light at once and for ever over the whole. It is so much the pleasanter if the young mind can strike this view out for itself, from materials which are forced upon it from the controversies of the day; if it can find a certain solution of pending questions, and show itself wiser even than the wisest of its own, the very last age. So far as appears, this was the fortune of Gibbon. “It was not long,” he says, “since Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry* had sounded an alarm in the theological world; much ink and much gall had been spent in defence of the primitive miracles; and the two dullest of their champions were crowned with academic honours by the University of Oxford. The name of Middleton was unpopular; and his proscription very naturally led me to peruse his writings

and those of his antagonists" It is not difficult to discover in this work easy and striking arguments which might lead an untaught mind to the communion of Rome. As to the peculiar belief of its author, there has been much controversy, with which we have not here the least concern; but the natural conclusion to which it would lead a simple intellect is, that all miracles are equally certain or equally uncertain. "It being agreed, then," says the acute controversialist, "that in the original promise of these miraculous gifts there is no intimation of any particular period to which their continuance was limited, the next question is, by what sort of evidence the precise time of their duration is to be determined? But to this point one of the writers just referred to excuses himself, as we have seen, from giving any answer; and thinks it sufficient to declare in general that *the earliest fathers unanimously affirm them to have continued down to their times*. Yet he has not told us, as he ought to have done, to what age he limits the character of *the earliest fathers*; whether to the second or to the third century, or, with the generality of our writers, he means also to include the fourth. But to whatever age he may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be to assign a reason why he must needs stop there. In the meanwhile, by his appealing thus to the *earliest fathers* only as unanimous on this article, a common reader would be apt to infer that the later fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true, and the more we descend from those earliest fathers the more strong and explicit we find their successors in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers in their several ages, so that if the cause must be determined by *the unanimous consent of fathers*, we shall find as much reason to believe that those powers were continued even to the latest ages as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the apostles. But the same writer gives us two

reasons why he does not choose to say anything upon the subject of their duration: 1st, because *there is not light enough in history to settle it*; 2ndly, because *the thing itself is of no concern to us*. As to his first reason, I am at a loss to conceive what further light a professed advocate of the primitive ages and fathers can possibly require in this case. For as far as the Church historians can illustrate or throw light upon anything, there is not a single point in all history so constantly, explicitly, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of those powers through all ages, from the earliest father who first mentions them down to the time of the Reformation. Which same succession is still further deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Romish Church, to this very day. So that the only doubt which can remain with us is, whether the Church historians are to be trusted or not, for if any credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all or to none; because the reason of believing them in any one age will be found to be of equal force in all, as far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested"\*. In *terms* this and the whole of Middleton's argument is so shaped as to avoid including in its scope the miracles of Scripture, which are mentioned throughout with eulogiums and acquiescence, and so as to make you doubt whether the author believed them or not. This is exactly one of the pretences which the young strong mind delights to tear down. It would argue, "This writer evidently *means* that the apostolic miracles have just as much evidence and no more than the popish or the patristic; and how strong"—for Middleton is a master of telling statement—"he shows that evidence to be! I won't give up the apostolic miracles, I cannot; yet I must believe what has as much of historical testimony

\* Preface to *Free Inquiry*.

in its favour. It is no *reductio ad absurdum* that we must go over to the Church of Rome, it is the most diffused of Christian creeds, the oldest of Christian Churches." And so the logic of the sceptic becomes, as often since, the most efficient instrument of the all-believing and all-determining Church.

The consternation of Gibbon's relatives seems to have been enormous. They cast about what to do. From the experience of Oxford, they perhaps thought that it would be useless to have recourse to the Anglican clergy; this resource had failed. So they took him to Mr. Mallet, a Deist, to see if he could do anything; but he did nothing. Their next step was nearly as extraordinary. They placed him at Lausanne, in the house of M. Pavilliard, a French Protestant minister. After the easy income, complete independence, and unlimited credit of an English undergraduate, he was thrown into a foreign country, deprived, as he says, by ignorance of the language, both of "speech and hearing,"—in the position of a schoolboy, with a small allowance of pocket-money, and without the Epicurean comforts on which he already set some value. He laments the "indispensable comfort of a servant," and the "sordid and uncleanly table of Madame Pavilliard." In our own day the watchful sagacity of Cardinal Wiseman would hardly allow a promising convert of expectations and talents to remain unsolaced in so pitiful a situation; we should hear soothing offers of flight or succour, some insinuations of a Popish domestic and interesting repasts. But a hundred years ago the attention of the Holy See was very little directed to our English youth, and Gibbon was left to endure his position.

It is curious that he made himself comfortable. Though destitute of external comforts which he did not despise, he found what was the greatest luxury to his disposition, steady study and regular tuition. His tutor was, of course, to convert him if he could, but as they had no language in common, there was the pre-

liminary occupation of teaching French. During five years both tutor and pupil steadily exerted themselves to repair the defects of a neglected and ill-grounded education. We hear of the perusal of Terence, Virgil, Horace, and Tacitus. Cicero was translated into French, and translated back again into Latin. In both languages the pupil's progress was sound and good. From letters of his which still exist, it is clear that he then acquired the exact and steady knowledge of Latin of which he afterwards made so much use. His circumstances compelled him to master French. If his own letters are to be trusted, he would be an example of his own doctrine, that no one is thoroughly master of more than one language at a time, they read like the letters of a Frenchman trying and failing to write English. But perhaps there was a desire to magnify his continental progress, and towards the end of the time some wish to make his friends fear he was forgetting his own language.

Meantime the work of conversion was not forgotten. In some letters which are extant, M. Pavilliard celebrates the triumph of his logic. "J'ai renversé," says the pastor, "l'ineffabilité de l'Église; j'ai prouvé que jamais saint Pierre n'a été chef des apôtres, que quand il l'aurait été, le pape n'est point son successeur, qu'il est douteux que saint Pierre ait jamais été à Rome; mais supposé qu'il y ait été, il n'a pas été évêque de cette ville, que la transubstantiation est une invention humaine, et peu ancienne dans l'Église," and so on through the usual list of Protestant arguments. He magnifies a little Gibbon's strength of conviction, as it makes the success of his own logic seem more splendid; but states two curious things. first, that Gibbon at least *pretended* to believe in the Pretender, and what is more amazing still—all but incredible—that he fasted. Such was the youth of the Epicurean historian!

It is probable, however, that the skill of the Swiss pastor was not the really operating cause of the event.

Perhaps experience shows that the converts which Rome has made, with the threat of unbelief and the weapons of the sceptic, have rarely been permanent or advantageous to her. It is at best but a dangerous logic to drive men to the edge and precipice of scepticism, in the hope that they will recoil in horror to the very interior of credulity. Possibly men may show their courage—they may vanquish the *argumentum ad terrorem*—they may not find scepticism so terrible. This last was Gibbon's case. A more insidious adversary than the Swiss theology was at hand to sap his Roman Catholic belief. Pavilliard had a fair French library—not ill stored in the recent publications of that age—of which he allowed his pupil the continual use. It was as impossible to open any of them and not come in contact with infidelity, as to come to England and not to see a green field. Scepticism is not so much a part of the French literature of that day as its animating spirit—its essence, its vitality. You can no more cut it out and separate it, than you can extract from Wordsworth his conception of nature, or from Swift his common-sense. And it is of the subtlest kind. It has little in common with the rough disputation of the English deist, or the perplexing learning of the German theologian, but works with a tool more insinuating than either. It is, in truth, but the spirit of the world, which does not argue, but assumes, which does not so much elaborate, as hints; which does not examine, but suggests. With the traditions of the Church it contrasts traditions of its own, its technicalities are *bon sens, l'usage du monde, le fanatisme, l'enthousiasme*; to high hopes, noble sacrifices, awful lives, it opposes quiet ease, skilful comfort, placid sense, polished indifference. Old as transubstantiation may be, it is not older than Horace and Lucian. Lord Byron, in the well-known lines, has coupled the names of the two literary exiles on the Leman Lake. The pages of Voltaire could not but remind Gibbon that the scepticism from which he

had revolted was compatible with literary eminence and European fame—gave a piquancy to ordinary writing—was the very expression of caustic caution and gentlemanly calm.

The grave and erudite habits of Gibbon soon developed themselves. Independently of these abstruse theological disputations, he spent many hours daily—rising early and reading carefully—on classical and secular learning. He was not, however, wholly thus engrossed. There was in the neighbourhood of Lausanne a certain Mademoiselle Curchod, to whom he devoted some of his time. She seems to have been a morbidly rational lady; at least she had a grave taste. Gibbon could not have been a very enlivening lover; he was decidedly plain, and his predominating taste was for solid learning. But this was not all; she formed an attachment to M. Necker, afterwards the most slow of premiers, whose financial treatises can hardly have been agreeable even to a Genevese beauty. This was, however, at a later time. So far as appears, Gibbon was her first love. How extreme her feelings were one does not know. Those of Gibbon can scarcely be supposed to have done him any harm. However, there was an intimacy, a flirtation, an engagement—when, as usual, it appeared that neither had any money. That the young lady should procure any seems to have been out of the question; and Gibbon, supposing that he might, wrote to his father. The reply was unfavourable. Gibbon's mother was dead; Mr. Gibbon senior was married again; and even in other circumstances would have been scarcely ready to encourage a romantic engagement to a lady with nothing. She spoke no English, too, and marriage with a person speaking only French is still regarded as a most unnatural event; forbidden, not indeed by the literal law of the Church, but by those higher instinctive principles of our nature, to which the bluntest own obedience No father could be expected to violate at once pecuniary

duties and patriotic principles. Mr Gibbon senior forbade the match. The young lady does not seem to have been quite ready to relinquish all hope; but she had shown a grave taste, and fixed her affection, on a sound and cold mind. "I sighed," narrates the historian, "as a lover, but I obeyed as a son." "I have seen," says M. Suard, "the letter in which Gibbon communicated to Mademoiselle Curchod the opposition of his father to their marriage. The first pages are tender and melancholy, as might be expected from an unhappy lover, the latter become by degrees calm and reasonable, and the letter concludes with these words. *C'est pourquoi, mademoiselle, j'ai l'honneur d'être votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, Edward Gibbon.*" Her father died soon afterwards, and "she returned to Geneva, where, by teaching young ladies, she earned a hard subsistence for herself and her mother; but the tranquil disposition of her admirer preserved him from any romantic display of sympathy and fidelity. He continued to study various readings in Cicero, as well as the passage of Hannibal over the Alps; and with those affectionate resources set sentiment at defiance. Yet thirty years later the lady, then the wife of the most conspicuous man in Europe, was able to suggest useful reflections to an aged bachelor, slightly dreaming of a superannuated marriage. "Gardez-vous, monsieur, de former un de ces liens tardifs le mariage qui rend heureux dans l'âge mûr, c'est celui qui fut contracté dans la jeunesse. Alors seulement la réunion est parfaite, les goûts se communiquent, les sentiments se répandent, les idées deviennent communes, les facultés intellectuelles se modèlent mutuellement. Toute la vie est double, et toute la vie est une prolongation de la jeunesse; car les impressions de l'âme commandent aux yeux, et la beauté qui n'est plus conserve encore son empire; mais pour vous, monsieur, dans toute la vigueur de la pensée, lorsque toute l'existence est décidée, l'on ne pourrait sans un miracle trouver une femme digne de vous; et une

association d'un genre imparfait rappelle toujours la statue d'Horace, qui joint à une belle tête le corps d'un stupide poisson Vous êtes marié avec la gloire." She was then a cultivated French lady, giving an account of the reception of the *Decline and Fall* at Paris, and expressing rather peculiar ideas on the style of Tacitus. The world had come round to her side, and she explains to her old lover rather well her happiness with M Necker.

After living nearly five years at Lausanne, Gibbon returned to England. Continental residence has made a great alteration in many Englishmen; but few have undergone so complete a metamorphosis as Edward Gibbon. He left his own country a hot-brained and ill-taught youth, willing to sacrifice friends and expectations for a superstitious and half-known creed; he returned a cold and accomplished man, master of many accurate ideas, little likely to hazard any coin for any faith: already, it is probable, inclined in secret to a cautious scepticism; placing thereby, as it were, upon a system the frigid prudence and unventuring incredulity congenial to his character. His change of character changed his position among his relatives. His father, he says, met him as a friend; and they continued thenceforth on a footing of "easy intimacy" Especially after the little affair of Mademoiselle Curchod, and the "very sensible view he took in that instance of the matrimonial relation," there can be little question that Gibbon was justly regarded as a most safe young man, singularly prone to large books, and a little too fond of French phrases and French ideas, and yet with a great feeling of common-sense, and a wise preference of permanent money to transitory sentiment His father allowed him a moderate, and but a moderate, income, which he husbanded with great care, and only voluntarily expended in the purchase and acquisition of serious volumes He lived an externally idle but really studious life, varied by tours in France and Italy; the

toils of which, though not in description very formidable, a trifle tried a sedentary habit and somewhat corpulent body The only English avocation which he engaged in was, oddly enough, war. It does not appear the most likely in this pacific country, not does he seem exactly the man for *la grande guerre*, but so it was; and the fact is an example of a really Anglican invention The English have discovered pacific war. We may not be able to kill people as well as the French, or fit out and feed distant armaments as neatly as they do; but we are unrivalled at a quiet armament here at home which never kills anybody, and never wants to be sent anywhere A "constitutional militia" is a beautiful example of the mild efficacy of civilization, which can convert even the "great manslaying profession" (as Carlyle calls it) into a quiet and dining association Into this force Gibbon was admitted; and immediately, contrary to his anticipations, and very much against his will, was called out for permanent duty The hero of the corps was a certain dining Sir Thomas, who used at the end of each new bottle to announce with increasing joy how much soberer he had become What his fellow-officers thought of Gibbon's French predilections and large volumes it is not difficult to conjecture; and he complains bitterly of the interruption to his studies. However, his easy composed nature soon made itself at home; his polished tact partially concealed from the "mess" his recondite pursuits, and he contrived to make the Hampshire armament of classical utility "I read," he says, "the Analysis of Cæsar's Campaign in Africa Every motion of that great general is laid open with a critical sagacity. A complete military history of his campaigns would do almost as much honour to M Guichardt as to Cæsar. This finished the *Mémoires*, which gave me a much clearer notion of ancient tactics than I ever had before. Indeed, my own military knowledge was of some service to me, as I am well acquainted with the modern dis-

cipline and exercise of a battalion. So that though much inferior to M. Folard and M. Guichardt, who had seen service, I am a much better judge than Salmasius, Casaubon, or Lipsius, mere scholars, who perhaps had never seen a battalion under arms." \*

The real occupation of Gibbon, as this quotation might suggest, was his reading ; and this was of a peculiar sort. There are many kinds of readers, and each has a sort of perusal suitable to his kind. There is the voracious reader, like Dr Johnson, who extracts with grasping appetite the large features, the mere essence of a trembling publication, and rejects the rest with contempt and disregard. There is the subtle reader, who pursues with fine attention the most imperceptible and delicate ramifications of an interesting topic, marks slight traits, notes changing manners, has a keen eye for the character of his author, is minutely attentive to every prejudice and awake to every passion, watches syllables and waits on words, is alive to the light air of nice associations which float about every subject—the motes in the bright sunbeam—the delicate gradations of the passing shadows. There is the stupid reader, who prefers dull books—is generally to be known by his disregard of small books and English books, but likes masses in modern Latin, *Grævius de torpore mirabili* ; *Horrificus de gravitate sapientiæ*. But Gibbon was not of any of these classes. He was what common people would call a matter-of-fact, and philosophers nowadays a *positive* reader. No disciple of M. Comte could attend more strictly to precise and provable phenomena. His favourite points are those which can be weighed and measured. Like the dull reader, he had perhaps a preference for huge books in unknown tongues ; but, on the other hand, he wished those books to contain real and accurate information. He liked the firm earth of positive knowledge. His fancy was not flexible



journal of his daily studies. It is true, it seems to have been revised by himself ; and so great a narrator would group effectively facts with which he was so familiar ; but allowing any discount (if we may use so mean a word) for the skilful art of the impressive historian, there will yet remain in the *Extraits de mon Journal* a wonderful monument of learned industry. You may open them anywhere. “*Dissertation on the Medal of Smyrna*, by M. de Boze : replete with erudition and taste ; containing curious researches on the pre-eminence of the cities of Asia.—*Researches on the Polypus*, by Mr. Trembley. A new world : throwing light on physics, but darkening metaphysics.—*Vegetius’s Institutions*. This writer on tactics has good general notions ; but his particular account of the Roman discipline is deformed by confusion and anachronisms”\* Or, “I this day began a very considerable task, which was to read Cluverius’ *Italia Antiqua*, in two volumes folio, Leyden, 1624, Elzevirs” ; † and it appears he did read it as well as begin it, which is the point where most enterprising men would have failed. From the time of his residence at Lausanne his Latin scholarship had been sound and good, and his studies were directed to the illustration of the best Roman authors ; but it is curious to find on 16th August 1761, after his return to England, and when he was twenty-four years old, the following extract : “I have at last finished the *Iliad*. As I undertook it to improve myself in the Greek language, which I had totally neglected for some years past, and to which I never applied myself with a proper attention, I must give a reason why I began with Homer, and that contrary to Le Clerc’s advice. I had two : 1st, As Homer is the most ancient Greek author (excepting perhaps Hesiod) who is now extant ; and as he was not only the poet, but the lawgiver, the theologian, the historian, and the philosopher of the ancients, every

\* 5th December 1762.

† 13th October 1762

succeeding writer is full of quotations from, or allusions to, his writings, which it would be difficult to understand without a previous knowledge of them. In this situation was it not natural to follow the ancients themselves, who always began their studies by the perusal of Homer? 2ndly, No writer ever treated such a variety of subjects As every part of civil, military, or economical life is introduced into his poems, and as the simplicity of his age allowed him to call everything by its proper name, almost the whole compass of the Greek tongue is comprised in Homer. I have so far met with the success I hoped for, that I have acquired a great facility in reading the language, and treasured up a very great stock of words What I have rather neglected is the grammatical construction of them, and especially the many various inflexions of the verbs In order to acquire that dry but necessary branch of knowledge, I propose bestowing some time every morning on the perusal of the *Greek Grammar of Port Royal*, as one of the best extant I believe that I read nearly one-half of Homer like a mere schoolboy, not enough master of the words to elevate myself to the poetry. The remainder I read with a good deal of care and criticism, and made many observations on them. Some I have inserted here; for the rest I shall find a proper place. Upon the whole, I think that Homer's few faults (for some he certainly has) are lost in the variety of his beauties I expected to have finished him long before. The delay was owing partly to the circumstances of my way of life and avocations, and partly to my own fault; for while every one looks on me as a prodigy of application, I know myself how strong a propensity I have to indolence." Posterity will confirm the contemporary theory that he was a "prodigy" of steady study. Those who know what the Greek language is, how much of the *Decline and Fall* depends on Greek authorities, how few errors the keen criticism of divines and scholars has been able to detect in his employment of them, will

best appreciate the patient everyday labour which could alone repair the early neglect of so difficult an attainment.

It is odd how little Gibbon wrote, at least for the public, in early life. More than twenty-two years elapsed from his first return from Lausanne to the appearance of the first volume of his great work, and in that long interval his only important publication, if it can indeed be so called, was a French essay, *Sur l'Etude de la Littérature*, which contains some sensible remarks, and shows much regular reading; but which is on the whole a "conceivable treatise," and would be wholly forgotten if it had been written by any one else. It was little read in England, and must have been a serious difficulty to his friends in the militia; but the Parisians read it, or said they had read it, which is more in their way, and the fame of being a French author was a great aid to him in foreign society. It flattered, indeed, the French *literati* more than any one can now fancy. The French had then the idea that it was uncivilized to speak any other language, and the notion of *writing* any other seemed quite a *bêtise*. By a miserable misfortune you might not know French, but at least you could conceal it assiduously; white paper anyhow might go unsoiled; posterity at least should not hear of such ignorance. The Parisian was to be the universal tongue. And it did not seem absurd, especially to those only slightly acquainted with foreign countries, that this might in part be so. Political eminence had given their language a diplomatic supremacy. No German literature existed as yet; Italy had ceased to produce important books. There was only England left to dispute the literary omnipotence; and such an attempt as Gibbon's was a peculiarly acceptable flattery, for it implied that her most cultivated men were beginning to abandon their own tongue, and to write like other nations in the cosmopolitan *lingua franca*. A few far-seeing observers, however, already contemplated

the train of events which at the present day give such a preponderating influence to our own writers, and make it an arduous matter even to explain the conceivability of the French ambition. Of all men living then or since, David Hume was the most likely from prejudice and habit to take an unfavourable view of English literary influence ; he had more literary fame than he deserved in France, and less in England ; he had much of the French neatness, he had but little of the English nature , yet his cold and discriminating intellect at once emancipated him from the sophistries which imposed on those less watchful. He wrote to Gibbon : “ I have only one objection, derived from the language in which it is written Why do you compose in French, and carry faggots into the wood, as Horace says with regard to Romans who wrote in Greek ? I grant that you have a like motive to those Romans, and adopt a language much more generally diffused than your native tongue ; but have you not remarked the fate of those two ancient languages in the following ages ? The Latin, though then less celebrated and confined to more narrow limits, has in some measure outlived the Greek, and is now more generally understood by men of letters. Let the French, therefore, triumph in the present diffusion of their tongue. Our solid and increasing establishments in America, where we need less dread the inundation of barbarians, promise a superior stability and duration to the English language.” \* The cool sceptic was correct The great breeding people have gone out and multiplied ; colonies in every clime attest our success , French is the *patois* of Europe ; English is the language of the world

Gibbon took the advice of his sagacious friend, and prepared himself for the composition of his great work in English His studies were destined, however, to undergo an interruption. “ Yesterday morning,” he

\* 24th October 1767 Given in note to the *Memoirs*

wrote to a friend, “about half an hour after seven, as I was destroying an army of barbarians, I heard a double rap at the door, and my friend Mr. Eliot was soon introduced. After some idle conversation, he told me that if I was desirous of being in Parliament he had an independent seat very much at my service” The borough was Liskeard ; and the epithet independent is, of course, ironical, Mr. Eliot being himself the constituency of that place. The offer was accepted, and one of the most learned of members of Parliament took his seat.

The political life of Gibbon is briefly described. He was a supporter of Lord North. That well-known statesman was, in the most exact sense, a representative man,—although representative of the class of persons most out of favour with the transcendental thinkers who invented this name. Germans deny it, but in every country common opinions are very common. Everywhere, there exists the comfortable mass ; quiet, sagacious, short-sighted,—such as the Jews whom Rabshakeh tempted by their vine and their fig-tree ; such as the English with their snug dining-room and after-dinner nap, domestic happiness and Bullo coal ; sensible, solid men, without stretching irritable reason, but with a placid, supine instinct ; without originality and without folly ; judicious in their dealings, respected in the world ; wanting little, sacrificing nothing, good-tempered people in a word, “caring for nothing until they are themselves hurt.” Lord North was one of this class. You could hardly make him angry. “No doubt,” he said, tapping his fat sides, “I am that odious thing a minister ; and I believe other people wish they were so too.” Profound people look deeply for the maxims of his policy ; and these being on the surface, of course they fail to find them. He did, not what the mind, but what the *body* of the community wanted to have done ; he appealed to the real people, the large English commonplace herd. His abilities

were great; and with them he did what people with no abilities wished to do, and could not do. Lord Brougham has published the king's letters to him, showing that which partial extracts had made known before, that Lord North was quite opposed to the war he was carrying on; was convinced it could not succeed; hardly, in fact, wished it might. Why did he carry it on? *Vox populi*, the voice of well-dressed men commanded it to be done; and he cheerfully sacrificed American people, who were nothing to him, to English, who were something, and a king, who was much Gibbon was the very man to support such a ruler. His historical writings have given him a posthumous eminence; but in his own time he was doubtless thought a sensible safe man, of ordinary thoughts and intelligible actions. To do him justice, he did not pretend to be a hero. "You know," he wrote to his friend Deyverdun, "que je suis entré au parlement sans patriotisme, sans ambition, et que toutes mes vues se bornoient à la place commode et honnête d'un lord of trade." "Wise in his generation" was written on his brow. He quietly and gently supported the policy of his time.

Even, however, amid the fatigue of parliamentary attendance,—the fatigue, in fact, of attending a nocturnal and oratorical club, where you met the best people, who could not speak, as well as a few of the worst, who *would*,—Gibbon's history made much progress. The first volume, a quarto, one-sixth of the whole, was published in the spring of 1776, and at once raised his fame to a high point. Ladies actually read it—read about Boëtia and Tarragonensis, the Roman legions and the tribunitian powers. Grave scholars wrote dreary commendations. "The first impression," he writes, "was exhausted in a few days; a second and a third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; and my bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin. My book was on every table"—tables must have been rather few in that age—"and almost on

every toilette ; the historian was crowned by the taste or fashion of the day ; nor was the general voice disturbed by the barking of any profound critic." The noise penetrated deep into the unlearned classes. Mr Sheridan, who never read anything " on principle," said that the crimes of Warren Hastings surpassed anything to be found in the " correct sentences of Tacitus or the *luminous* page of Gibbon." \* Some one seems to have been struck with the jet of learning, and questioned the great wit. " I said," he replied, " *voluminous* "

History, it is said, is of no use ; at least a great critic, who is understood to have in the press a very elaborate work in that kind,† not long since seemed to allege that writings of this sort did not establish a theory of the universe, and were therefore of no avail. But whatever may be the use of this sort of composition in itself and abstractedly, it is certainly of great use relatively and to literary men. Consider the position of a man of that species. He sits beside a library fire, with nice white paper, a good pen, a capital style, every means of saying everything, but nothing to say ; of course he is an able man, of course he has an active intellect, beside wonderful culture ; but still one cannot always have original ideas. Every day cannot be an era ; a train of new speculation very often will not be found ; and how dull it is to make it your business to write, to stay by yourself in a room to write, and then to have nothing to say ! It is dreary work mending seven pens, and waiting for a theory to " turn up " What a gain if something would happen ! then one could describe it. Something has happened, and that something is history. On this account, since a sedate Greek discovered this plan for a grave immortality, a series of accomplished men have seldom been found wanting to derive a literary capital from their active and barbarous kindred. Perhaps when a Visigoth broke a

\* Speech on the trial.

† Probably Carlyle and his *Frederick the Great* are meant

head, he thought that that was all. Not so; he was making history; Gibbon has written it down.

The manner of writing history is as characteristic of the narrator as the actions are of the persons who are related to have performed them; often much more so. It may be generally defined as a view of one age taken by another, a picture of a series of men and women painted by one of another series. Of course, this definition seems to exclude contemporary history; but if we look into the matter carefully, is there such a thing? What are all the best and most noted works that claim the title—memoirs, scraps, materials—composed by men of like passions with the people they speak of, involved it may be in the same events, describing them with the partiality and narrowness of eager actors; or even worse, by men far apart in a monkish solitude, familiar with the lettuces of the convent garden, but hearing only faint dim murmurs of the great transactions which they slowly jot down in the barren chronicle; these are not to be named in the same short breath, or included in the same narrow word, with the equable, poised, philosophic narrative of the retrospective historian. In the great histories there are two topics of interest—the man as a type of the age in which he lives,—the events and manners of the age he is describing; very often almost all the interest is the contrast of the two.

You should do everything, said Lord Chesterfield, in minuet time. It was in that time that Gibbon wrote his history, and such was the manner of the age. You fancy him in a suit of flowered velvet, with a bag and sword, wisely smiling, composedly rounding his periods. You seem to see the grave bows, the formal politeness, the finished deference. You perceive the minuetic action accompanying the words. "Give," it would say, "Augustus a chair: Zenobia, the humblest of your slaves: Odoacer, permit me to correct the defect in your attire" As the slap-dash sentences of a rushing

critic express the hasty impatience of modern manners, so the deliberate emphasis, the slow acumen, the steady argument, the impressive narration bring before us what is now a tradition, the picture of the correct eighteenth-century gentleman, who never failed in a measured politeness, partly because it was due in propriety towards others, and partly because from his own dignity it was due most obviously to himself.

And not only is this true of style, but it may be extended to other things also. There is no one of the many literary works produced in the eighteenth century more thoroughly characteristic of it than Gibbon's history. The special characteristic of that age is its clinging to the definite and palpable; it had a taste beyond everything for what is called solid information. In literature the period may be defined as that in which authors had ceased to write for students, and had not begun to write for women. In the present day, no one can take up any book intended for general circulation, without clearly seeing that the writer supposes most of his readers will be ladies or young men, and that in proportion to his judgment he is attending to their taste. Two or three hundred years ago books were written for professed and systematic students,—the class the Fellows of colleges were designed to be,—who used to go on studying them all their lives. Between these there was a time in which the more marked class of literary consumers were strong-headed, practical men. Education had not become so general, or so feminine, as to make the present style—what is called the “brilliant style”—at all necessary; but there was enough culture to make the demand of common diffused persons more effectual than that of special and secluded scholars. A book-buying public had arisen of sensible men, who would not endure the awful folio style in which the schoolmen wrote. From peculiar causes, too, the business of that age was perhaps more free from the hurry and distraction which disable so many of our practical

men now from reading. You accordingly see in the books of the last century what is called a massive tone; a firm, strong, perspicuous narration of matter of fact, a plain argument, a contempt for every thing which distinct definite people cannot entirely and thoroughly comprehend. There is no more solid book in the world than Gibbon's history. Only consider the chronology. It begins before the year ONE and goes down to the year 1453, and is a schedule or series of schedules of important events during that time. Scarcely any fact deeply affecting European civilization is wholly passed over, and the great majority of facts are elaborately recounted. Laws, dynasties, churches, barbarians, appear and disappear. Everything changes, the old world—the classical civilization of form and definition—passes away, a new world of free spirit and inward growth emerges; between the two lies a mixed writhing interval of trouble and confusion, when everybody hates everybody, and the historical student leads a life of skirmishes, is oppressed with broils and feuds. All through this long period Gibbon's history goes with steady consistent pace, like a Roman legion through a troubled country—*hæret pede pes*; up hill and down hill, through marsh and thicket, through Goth or Parthian—the firm, defined array passes forward—a type of order, and an emblem of civilization. Whatever may be the defects of Gibbon's history, none can deny him a proud precision and a style in marching order.

Another characteristic of the eighteenth century is its taste for dignified pageantry. What an existence was that of Versailles! How gravely admirable to see the *grand monarque* shaved, and dressed, and powdered; to look on and watch a great man carefully amusing himself with dreary trifles. Or do we not even now possess an invention of that age—the great eighteenth-century footman, still in the costume of his era, with dignity and powder, vast calves and noble mien?

What a world it must have been when all men looked like that! Go and gaze with rapture at the footboard of a carriage, and say, Who would not obey a premier with such an air? Grave, tranquil, decorous pageantry is a part, as it were, of the essence of the last age. There is nothing more characteristic of Gibbon. A kind of pomp pervades him. He is never out of livery. He ever selects for narration those themes which look most like a levee: grave chamberlains seem to stand throughout; life is a vast ceremony, the historian at once the dignitary and the scribe.

The very language of Gibbon shows these qualities. Its majestic march has been the admiration, its rather pompous cadence the sport, of all perusers. It has the greatest merit of an historical style: it is always going on, you feel no doubt of its continuing in motion. Many narrators of the reflective class, Sir Archibald Alison for example, fail in this: your constant feeling is, "Ah! he has pulled up, he is going to be profound, he never will go on again." Gibbon's reflections connect the events; they are not sermons between them. But, notwithstanding, the manner of the *Decline and Fall* is the last which should be recommended for strict imitation. It is not a style in which you can tell the truth. A monotonous writer is suited only to monotonous matter. Truth is of various kinds—grave, solemn, dignified, petty, low, ordinary, and an historian who has to tell the truth must be able to tell what is vulgar as well as what is great, what is little as well as what is amazing. Gibbon is at fault here. He *cannot* mention *Asia Minor*. The petty order of sublunary matters, the common gross existence of ordinary people; the necessary littlenesses of necessary life, are little suited to his sublime narrative. Men on the *Times* feel this acutely, it is most difficult at first to say many things in the huge imperial manner. And after all you cannot tell everything. "How, sir," asked a reviewer of Sydney Smith's life, "do you say a 'good fellow' in

print?" "Mr. —," replied the editor, "you should not say it at all" Gibbon was aware of this rule; he omits what does not suit him; and the consequence is, that though he has selected the most various of historical topics, he scarcely gives you an idea of variety. The ages change, but the varnish of the narration is the same.

It is not unconnected with this fault that Gibbon gives us but an indifferent description of individual character. People seem a good deal alike. The cautious scepticism of his cold intellect, which disinclined him to every extreme, depreciates great virtues and extenuates vices, and we are left with a tame neutral character, capable of nothing extraordinary,—hateful, as the saying is, "both to God and to the enemies of God."

A great point in favour of Gibbon is the existence of his history. Some great historians seem likely to fail here. A good judge was asked which he preferred, Macaulay's *History of England* or Lord Mahon's "Why," he replied, "you observe Lord Mahon has written his history, and by what I see Macaulay's will be written not only for, but *among posterity*." Practical people have little idea of the practical ability required to write a large book, and especially a large history. Long before you get to the pen, there is an immensity of pure business; heaps of material are strewn everywhere; but they lie in disorder, unread, uncatalogued, unknown. It seems a dreary waste of life to be analysing, indexing, extracting words and passages, in which one per cent of the contents are interesting, and not half of that percentage will after all appear in the flowing narrative. As an accountant takes up a bankrupt's books filled with confused statements of ephemeral events, the disorderly record of unprofitable speculations, and charges this to that head, and that to this,—estimates earnings, specifies expenses, demonstrates failures, so the great narrator, going over the scattered annalists of extinct ages, groups and

divides, notes and combines, until from a crude mass of darkened fragments there emerges a clear narrative, a concise account of the result and upshot of the whole. In this art Gibbon was a master. The laborious research of German scholarship, the keen eye of theological zeal, a steady criticism of eighty years, have found few faults of detail. The account has been worked right, the proper authorities consulted, an accurate judgment formed, the most telling incidents selected. Perhaps experience shows that there is something English in this talent. The Germans are more elaborate in single monographs; but they seem to want the business ability to work out a complicated narrative, to combine a long whole. The French are neat enough, and their style is very quick, but then it is difficult to believe their facts; the account on its face seems too plain, and no true Parisian ever was an antiquary. The great classical histories published in this country in our own time show that the talent is by no means extinct, and they likewise show, what is also evident, that this kind of composition is easier with respect to ancient than with respect to modern times. The barbarians burned the books; and though all the historians abuse them for it, it is quite evident that in their hearts they are greatly rejoiced. If the books had existed, they would have had to read them. Macaulay has to peruse every book printed with long *f*'s; and it is no use after all; somebody will find some stupid MS, an old account-book of an "ingenious gentleman," and with five entries therein destroy a whole hypothesis. But Gibbon was exempt from this; he could count the books the efficient Goths bequeathed; and when he had mastered them he might pause. Still, it was no light matter, as any one who looks at the books—awful folios in the grave Bodleian—will most certainly credit and believe. And he did it all himself; he never showed his book to any friend, or asked any one to help him in the accumulating work, not even in the correction of

the press "Not a sheet," he says, "has been seen by any human eyes, excepting those of the author and printer; the faults and the merits are exclusively my own" And he wrote most of it with one pen, which must certainly have grown erudite towards the end.

The nature of his authorities clearly shows what the nature of Gibbon's work is. History may be roughly divided into universal and particular, the first being the narrative of events affecting the whole human race, at least the main historical nations, the narrative of whose fortunes is the story of civilization; and the latter being the relation of events relating to one or a few particular nations only. Universal history, it is evident, comprises great areas of space and long periods of time; you cannot have a series of events visibly operating on all great nations without time for their gradual operation, and without tracking them in succession through the various regions of their power. There is no instantaneous transmission in historical causation; a long interval is required for universal effects. It follows that universal history necessarily partakes of the character of a summary. You cannot recount the cumbrous annals of long epochs without condensation, selection, and omission, the narrative, when shortened within the needful limits, becomes concise and general. What it gains in time, according to the mechanical phrase, it loses in power. The particular history, confined within narrow limits, can show us the whole contents of these limits, explain its features of human interest, recount in graphic detail all its interesting transactions, touch the human heart with the power of passion, instruct the mind with patient instances of accurate wisdom. The universal is confined to a dry enumeration of superficial transactions; no action can have all its details, the canvas is so crowded that no figure has room to display itself effectively. From the nature of the subject, Gibbon's history is of the latter class; the sweep of the narrative is so wide;

the decline and fall of the Roman Empire being in some sense the most universal event which has ever happened,—being, that is, the historical incident which most affected all civilized men, and the very existence and form of civilization itself,—it is evident that we must look rather for a comprehensive generality than a telling minuteness of delineation. The history of a thousand years does not admit the pictorial detail which a Scott or a Macaulay can accumulate on the history of a hundred. Gibbon has done his best to avoid the dryness natural to such an attempt. He inserts as much detail as his limits will permit; selects for more full description striking people and striking transactions; brings together at a single view all that relates to single topics; above all, by a regular advance of narration, never ceases to imply the regular progress of events and the steady course of time. None can deny the magnitude of such an effort. After all, however, these are merits of what is technically termed composition, and are analogous to those excellences in painting or sculpture that are more respected by artists than appreciated by the public at large. The fame of Gibbon is highest among writers, those especially who have studied for years particular periods included in his theme (and how many those are; for in the East and West he has set his mark on all that is great for ten centuries<sup>1</sup>) acutely feel and admiringly observe how difficult it would be to say so much, and leave so little untouched; to compress so many telling points; to present in so few words so apt and embracing a narrative of the whole. But the mere unsophisticated reader scarcely appreciates this; he is rather awed than delighted, or rather, perhaps, he appreciates it for a little while, then is tired by the roll and glare; then, on any chance—the creaking of an organ, or the stirring of a mouse—in time of temptation he falls away. It has been said, the way to answer all objections to Milton is to take down the book and read him; the way to reverence Gibbon is not to read

him at all, but look at him, from outside, in the book-case, and think how much there is within; what a course of events, what a muster-roll of names, what a steady, solemn sound! You will not like to take the book down; but you will think how much you could be delighted if you would

It may be well, though it can be only in the most cursory manner, to examine the respective treatment of the various elements in this vast whole. The *History of the Decline and Fall* may be roughly and imperfectly divided into the picture of the Roman Empire—the narrative of barbarian incursions—the story of Constantinople: and some few words may be hastily said on each

The picture—for so, from its apparent stability when contrasted with the fluctuating character of the later period, we may call it—which Gibbon has drawn of the united empire has immense merit. The organization of the imperial system is admirably dwelt on; the manner in which the old republican institutions were apparently retained, but really altered, is compendiously explained, the mode in which the imperial will was transmitted to and carried out in remote provinces is distinctly displayed. But though the mechanism is admirably delineated, the dynamical principle, the original impulse is not made clear. You never feel you are reading about the Romans. Yet no one denies their character to be most marked. Poets and orators have striven for the expression of it

Macaulay has been similarly criticized, it has been said, that notwithstanding his great dramatic power, and wonderful felicity in the selection of events on which to exert it, he yet never makes us feel that we are reading about Englishmen. The coarse clay of our English nature *cannot* be represented in so fine a style. In the same way, and to a much greater extent (for this is perhaps an unthankful criticism, if we compare Macaulay's description of anybody with that of any other

historian), Gibbon is chargeable with neither expressing nor feeling the essence of the people concerning whom he is writing. There was, in truth, in the Roman people a warlike fanaticism, a puritanical essence, an interior, latent, restrained, enthusiastic religion, which was utterly alien to the cold scepticism of the narrator. Of course he was conscious of it. He indistinctly felt that at least there was something he did not like, but he could not realize or sympathize with it without a change of heart and nature. The old pagan has a sympathy with the religion of enthusiasm far above the reach of the modern Epicurean.

It may indeed be said, on behalf of Gibbon, that the old Roman character was in its decay, and that only such slight traces of it were remaining in the age of Augustus and the Antonines, that it is no particular defect in him to leave it unnoticed. Yet, though the intensity of its nobler peculiarities was on the wane, many a vestige would perhaps have been apparent to so learned an eye, if his temperament and disposition had been prone to seize upon and search for them. Nor is there any adequate appreciation of the compensating element, of the force which really held society together, of the fresh air of the Illyrian hills, of that army which, evermore recruited from northern and rugged populations, doubtless brought into the very centre of a degraded society the healthy simplicity of a vital, if barbarous religion.

It is no wonder that such a mind should have looked with displeasure on primitive Christianity. The whole of his treatment of that topic has been discussed by many pens, and three generations of ecclesiastical scholars have illustrated it with their emendations. Yet, if we turn over this, the latest and most elaborate edition, containing all the important criticisms of Milman and of Guizot, we shall be surprised to find how few instances of definite exact error such a scrutiny has been able to find out. As Paley, with his strong

sagacity, at once remarked, the subtle error rather lies hid in the sinuous folds than is directly apparent on the surface of the polished style Who, said the shrewd archdeacon, can refute a sneer? And yet even this is scarcely the exact truth The objection of Gibbon is, in fact, an objection rather to religion than to Christianity; as has been said, he did not appreciate, and could not describe, the most inward form of pagan piety, he objected to Christianity because it was the intensest of religions We do not mean by this to charge Gibbon with any denial of, any overt distinct disbelief in, the existence of a supernatural Being This would be very unjust; his cold composed mind had nothing in common with the Jacobinical outbreak of the next generation He was no doubt a theist after the fashion of natural theology; nor was he devoid of more than scientific feeling. All constituted authorities struck him with emotion, all ancient ones with awe. If the Roman Empire had descended to his time, how much he would have reverenced it! He had doubtless a great respect for the "First Cause"; it had many titles to approbation, "it was not conspicuous," he would have said, "but it was potent" A sensitive decorum revolted from the jar of atheistic disputation. We have already described him more than enough A sensible middle-aged man in political life, a bachelor, not himself gay, but living with gay men, equable and secular, cautious in his habits, tolerant in his creed, as Porson said, "never failing in natural feeling, except when women were to be ravished and Christians to be martyred" His writings are in character The essence of the far-famed fifteenth and sixteenth chapters is, in truth, but a description of unworldly events in the tone of this world, of awful facts in unmoved voice, of truths of the heart in the language of the eyes The wary sceptic has not even committed himself to definite doubts These celebrated chapters were in the first manuscript much longer, and were gradually reduced

to their present size by excision and compression. Who can doubt that in their first form they were a clear, or comparatively clear, expression of exact opinions on the Christian history, and that it was by a subsequent and elaborate process that they were reduced to their present and insidious obscurity? The toil has been effectual. "Divest," says Dean Milman of the introduction to the fifteenth chapter, "this whole passage of the latent sarcasm betrayed by the whole of the subsequent dissertation, and it might commence a Christian history, written in the most Christian spirit of candour" —

It is not for us here to go into any disquisition as to the comparative influence of the five earthly causes, to whose secondary operation the specious historian ascribes the progress of Christianity. Weariness and disinclination forbid. There can be no question that the polity of the Church, and the zeal of the converts, and other such things, did most materially conduce to the progress of the Gospel. But few will now attribute to these much of the effect. The real cause is the heaving of the mind after the truth. Troubled with the perplexities of time, weary with the vexation of ages, the spiritual faculty of man turns to the truth as the child turns to its mother. The thirst of the soul was to be satisfied, the deep torture of the spirit to have rest. There was an appeal to those

" High instincts, before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised " †

The mind of man has an appetite for the truth.

" Hence, in a season of calm weather,  
Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,—  
Can in a moment travel thither,

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\* Preface to his edition of the *Decline and Fall*  
† Wordsworth. "Intimations of Immortality," ix.

And see the children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore" \*

All this was not exactly in Gibbon's way, and he does not seem to have been able to conceive that it was in any one else's. Why his chapters had given offence he could hardly make out. It actually seems that he hardly thought that other people believed more than he did. "We may be well assured," says he, of a sceptic of antiquity, "that a writer conversant with the world would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not been already the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society." † "Had I," he says of himself, "believed that the majority of English readers were so fondly attached even to the name and shadow of Christianity, had I foreseen that the pious, the timid, and the prudent would feel, or would affect to feel, with such exquisite sensibility,—I might perhaps have softened the two invidious chapters, which would create many enemies and conciliate few friends" ‡. The state of belief at that time is a very large subject; but it is probable that in the cultivated cosmopolitan classes the continental scepticism was very rife, that among the hard-headed classes the rough spirit of English Deism had made progress. Though the mass of the people doubtless believed much as they now believe, yet the entire upper class was lazy and corrupt, and there is truth in the picture of the modern divine: "The thermometer of the Church of England sunk to its lowest point in the first thirty years of the reign of George III . . . In their preaching, nineteen clergymen out of twenty carefully abstained from dwelling upon Christian doctrines. Such topics exposed the preacher to the charge of fanaticism. Even the calm

\* Wordsworth "Intimations of Immortality," ix.

† *Decline and Fall*, chap. 11

‡ *Memoirs*

and sober Crabbe, who certainly never erred from excess of zeal, was stigmatized in those days as a Methodist, because he introduced into his sermons the notion of future reward and punishment. An orthodox clergyman (they said) should be content to show his people the worldly advantage of good conduct, and to leave heaven and hell to the ranters. Nor can we wonder that such should have been the notions of country parsons, when, even by those who passed for the supreme arbiters of orthodoxy and taste, the vapid rhetoric of Blair was thought the highest standard of Christian exhortation."\* It is among the excuses for Gibbon that he lived in such a world

There are slight palliations also in the notions then prevalent of the primitive Church. There was the Anglican theory that it was a *via media*, the most correct of periods, that its belief is to be the standard, its institutions the model, its practice the test of subsequent ages. There was the notion, not formally drawn out, but diffused through and implied in a hundred books of evidence—a notion in opposition to every probability, and utterly at variance with the New Testament—that the first converts were sober, hard-headed, cultivated inquirers,—Watsons, Paleys, Priestleys, on a small scale; weighing evidence, analysing facts, suggesting doubts, dwelling on distinctions, cold in their dispositions, moderate in their morals,—cautious in their creed. We now know that these were not they of whom the world was not worthy. It is ascertained that the times of the first Church were times of excitement; that great ideas falling on a mingled world were distorted by an untrained intellect, even in the moment in which they were received by a yearning heart; that strange confused beliefs, Millennialism, Gnosticism, Ebionitism, were accepted, not merely by outlying obscure heretics, but in a measure, half-and-half, one notion

\* "Church Parties," *Edinburgh Review* for October 1853, by W. J. Conybeare

more by one man, another more by his neighbour, confusedly and mixedly by the mass of Christians ; that the appeal was not to the questioning, thinking understanding, but to unheeding, all-venturing emotion ; to that lower class "from whom faiths ascend," and not to the cultivated and exquisite class by whom they are criticized ; that fervid men never embraced a more exclusive creed. You can say nothing favourable of the first Christians, except that they *were* Christians. We find no "form nor comeliness" in them ; no intellectual accomplishments, no caution in action, no discretion in understanding. There is no admirable quality except that, with whatever distortion, or confusion, or singularity, they at once accepted the great clear outline of belief in which to this day we live, move, and have our being. The offence of Gibbon is his disinclination to this simple essence ; his excuse, the historical errors then prevalent as to the primitive Christians, the real defects so natural in their position, the false merits ascribed to them by writers who from one reason or another desired to treat them as "an authority."

On the whole, therefore, it may be said of the first, and in some sense the most important, part of Gibbon's work, that though he has given an elaborate outline of the framework of society, and described its detail with pomp and accuracy, yet that he has not comprehended or delineated its nobler essence, pagan or Christian. Nor perhaps was it to be expected that he should, for he inadequately comprehended the dangers of the time ; he thought it the happiest period the world has ever known, he would not have comprehended the remark : "To see the old world in its worst estate we turn to the age of the satirist and of Tacitus, when all the different streams of civil coming from east, west, north, south, the vices of barbarism and the vices of civilization, remnants of ancient cults and the latest refinements of luxury and impurity, met and mingled on the banks of the Tiber. What could have been the state of society

when Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Heliogabalus, were the rulers of the world ? To a good man we should imagine that death itself would be more tolerable than the sight of such things coming upon the earth." \* So deep an ethical sensibility was not to be expected in the first century ; nor is it strange when, after seventeen hundred years, we do not find it in their historian.

Space has failed us, and we must be unmeaningly brief. The second head of Gibbon's history—the narrative of the barbarian invasions—has been recently criticized, on the ground that he scarcely enough explains the gradual but unceasing and inevitable manner in which the outer barbarians were affected by and assimilated to the civilization of Rome. Mr Congreve † has well observed, that the impression which Gibbon's narrative is insensibly calculated to convey is, that there was little or no change in the state of the Germanic tribes between the time of Tacitus and the final invasion of the Empire—a conclusion which is obviously incredible. To the general reader there will perhaps seem some indistinctness in this part of the work, nor is a free, confused barbarism a congenial subject for an imposing and orderly pencil. He succeeds better in the delineation of the riding monarchies, if we may so term them,—of the equestrian courts of Attila or Timour, in which the great scale, the concentrated power, the very enormity of the barbarism, give, so to speak, a shape to unshapeliness ; impart, that is, a horrid dignity to horse-flesh and mare's milk, an imposing oneness to the vast materials of a crude barbarity. It is needless to say that no one would search Gibbon for an explanation of the reasons or feelings by which the northern tribes were induced to accept Christianity.

It is on the story of Constantinople that the popularity of Gibbon rests. The vast extent of the topic,

\* Jowett. "Epistles of St Paul, chap 1 of Romans," *State of the Ancient World*

† *Lectures on the Roman Empire of the West*

the many splendid episodes it contains, its epic unity from the moment of the far-seeing selection of the city by Constantine to its last fall; its position as a link between Europe and Asia, its continuous history; the knowledge that through all that time it was, as now, a diadem by the waterside, a lure to be snatched by the wistful barbarian, a marvel to the West, a prize for the North and for the East;—these, and such as these ideas, are congenial topics to a style of pomp and grandeur. The East seems to require to be treated with a magnificence unsuitable to a colder soil. The nature of the events, too, is suitable to Gibbon's cursory, imposing manner. It is the history of a form of civilization, but without the power thereof; a show of splendour and vigour, but without bold life or interior reality. What an opportunity for an historian who loved the imposing pageantry and disliked the purer essence of existence! There were here neither bluff barbarians nor simple saints; there was nothing admitting of particular accumulated detail; we do not wish to know the interior of the stage, the imposing movements are all which should be seized. Some of the features, too, are curious in relation to those of the historian's life: the clear accounts of the theological controversies followed out with an appreciative minuteness so rare in a sceptic, are not disconnected with his early conversion to the scholastic Church, the brilliancy of the narrative reminds us of his enthusiasm for Arabic and the East; the minute description of a licentious epoch evinces the habit of a mind which, not being bold enough for the practice of licence, took a pleasure in following its theory. There is no subject which combines so much of unity with so much of variety.

It is evident, therefore, where Gibbon's rank as an historian must finally stand. He cannot be numbered among the great painters of human nature, for he has no sympathy with the heart and passions of our race; he has no place among the felicitous describers of de-

tailed life, for his subject was too vast for minute painting, and his style too uniform for a shifting scene. But he is entitled to a high—perhaps to a first place—among the orderly narrators of great events ; the composed expositors of universal history ; the tranquil artists who have endeavoured to diffuse a cold polish over the warm passions and desultory fortunes of mankind.

The life of Gibbon after the publication of his great work was not very complicated. During its composition he had withdrawn from Parliament and London to the studious retirement of Lausanne. Much eloquence has been expended on this voluntary exile, and it has been ascribed to the best and most profound motives. It is indeed certain that he liked a lettered solitude, preferred easy continental society, was not quite insensible to the charm of scenery, had a pleasure in returning to the haunts of his youth. Prosaic and pure history, however, must explain that he went abroad to *save*. Lord North had gone out of power. Mr. Burke, the Cobden of that era, had procured the abolition of the Lords of Trade ; the private income of Gibbon was not equal to his notion of a bachelor London life. The same sum was, however, a fortune at Lausanne. Most things, he acknowledged, were as dear ; but then he had not to buy so many things. Eight hundred a year placed him high in the social scale of the place. The inhabitants were gratified that a man of European reputation had selected their out-of-the-way town for the shrine of his fame ; he lived pleasantly and easily among easy, pleasant people ; a gentle hum of local admiration gradually rose, which yet lingers on the lips of erudite *laquais de place*. He still retains a fame unaccorded to any other historian ; they speak of the “hôtel Gibbon” ; there never was even an *estaminet* Tacitus, or a *café* Thucydides.

This agreeable scene, like many other agreeable scenes, was broken by a great thunderclap. The French

Revolution has disgusted many people; but perhaps it has never disgusted any one more than Gibbon. He had swept and garnished everything about him. Externally he had made a neat little hermitage in a gentle, social place; internally he had polished up a still theory of life, sufficient for the guidance of a cold and polished man. Everything seemed to be tranquil with him; the rigid must admit his decorum; the lax would not accuse him of rigour; he was of the world, and an elegant society naturally loved its own. On a sudden the hermitage was disturbed. No place was too calm for that excitement, scarcely any too distant for that uproar. The French war was a war of opinion, entering households, disturbing villages, dividing quiet friends. The Swiss took some of the infection. There was a not unnatural discord between the people of the Pays de Vaud and their masters the people of Berne. The letters of Gibbon are filled with invectives on the "Gallic barbarians" and panegyrics on Mr. Burke; military details, too, begin to abound—the peace of his retirement was at an end. It was an additional aggravation that the Parisians should do such things. It would not have seemed unnatural that northern barbarians—English, or other uncivilized nations—should break forth in rough riot or cruel licence; but that the people of the most civilized of all capitals, speaking the sole dialect of polished life, enlightened with all the enlightenment then known, should be guilty of excesses unparalleled, unwitnessed, unheard of, was a vexing trial to one who had admired them for many years. The internal creed and belief of Gibbon was as much attacked by all this as were his external circumstances. He had spent his time, his life, his energy, in putting a polished gloss on human tumult, a sneering gloss on human piety; on a sudden human passion broke forth—the cold and polished world seemed to meet its end; the thin superficies of civilization was torn asunder; the fountains of the great deep seemed opened; impiety

to meet its end, the foundations of the earth were out of course.

We now, after long familiarity and in much ignorance, can hardly read the history of those years without horror. what an effect must they have produced on those whose minds were fresh, and who knew the people killed! "Never," Gibbon wrote to an English nobleman, "did a revolution affect to such a degree the private existence of such numbers of the first people of a great country. Your examples of misery I could easily match with similar examples in this country and neighbourhood, and our sympathy is the deeper, as we do not possess, like you, the means of alleviating in some measure the misfortunes of the fugitives" \* It violently affected his views of English politics He before had a tendency, in consideration of his cosmopolitan cultivation, to treat them as local littlenesses, parish squabbles, but now his interest was keen and eager. "But," he says, "in this rage against slavery, in the numerous petitions against the slave-trade, was there no leaven of new democratical principles? no wild ideas of the rights and natural equality of man? It is these I fear. Some articles in newspapers, some pamphlets of the year, the Jockey Club, have fallen into my hands I do not infer much from such publications; yet I have never known them of so black and malignant a cast. I shuddered at Grey's motion, disliked the half-support of Fox, admired the firmness of Pitt's declaration, and excused the usual intemperance of Burke. Surely such men as —, —, —, have talents for mischief I see a club of reform which contains some respectable names Inform me of the professions, the principles, the plans, the resources of these reformers Will they heat the minds of the people? Does the French democracy gain no ground? Will the bulk of your party stand firm to their own interests and

\* To Lord Sheffield, 10th November 1792

that of their country? Will you not take some active measures to declare your sound opinions, and separate yourselves from your rotten members? If you allow them to perplex Government, if you trifle with this solemn business, if you do not resist the spirit of innovation in the first attempt, if you admit the smallest and most specious change in our parliamentary system, you are lost. You will be driven from one step to another; from principles just in theory to consequences most pernicious in practice; and your first concession will be productive of every subsequent mischief, for which you will be answerable to your country and to posterity. Do not suffer yourselves to be lulled into a false security; remember the proud fabric of the French monarchy. Not four years ago it stood founded, as it might seem, on the rock of time, force, and opinion; supported by the triple aristocracy of the Church, the nobility, and the Parliaments. They are crumbled into dust; they are vanished from the earth. If this tremendous warning has no effect on the men of property in England; if it does not open every eye, and raise every arm,—you will deserve your fate. If I am too precipitate, enlighten; if I am too desponding, encourage me. My pen has run into this argument; for, as much a foreigner as you think me, on this momentous subject I feel myself an Englishman.”\*

The truth clearly is, that he had arrived at the conclusion that he was the sort of person a populace kill. People wonder a great deal why very many of the victims of the French Revolution were particularly selected; the Marquis de Custine, especially, cannot divine why they executed *his* father. The historians cannot show that they committed any particular crimes; the marquises and marchionesses seem very inoffensive. The fact evidently is, that they were killed for being polite. The world felt itself unworthy of

\* To Lord Sheffield, 30th May 1792

them. There were so many bows, such regular smiles, such calm superior condescension,—could a mob be asked to endure it? Have we not all known a precise, formal, patronizing old gentleman—bland, imposing, something like Gibbon? Have we not suffered from his dignified attentions? If *we* had been on the Committee of Public Safety, can we doubt what would have been the fate of that man? Just so wrath and envy destroyed in France an upper-class world

After his return to England, Gibbon did not do much or live long. He completed his *Memoirs*, the most imposing of domestic narratives, the model of dignified detail. As we said before, if the Roman Empire *had* written about itself, this was how it would have done so. He planned some other works, but executed none; judiciously observing that building castles in the air was more agreeable than building them on the ground. His career was, however, drawing to an end. Earthly dignity had its limits, even the dignity of an historian. He had long been stout; and now symptoms of dropsy began to appear. After a short interval, he died on the 16th of January 1794. We have sketched his character, and have no more to say. After all, what is our criticism worth? It only fulfils his aspiration, "that a hundred years hence I may still continue to be abused."

\* *Memoirs*

## THE CHARACTER OF SIR ROBERT PEEL\*

(1856)

MOST people have looked over old letters. They have been struck with the change of life, with the doubt on things now certain, the belief in things now incredible, the oblivion of what now seems most important, the strained attention to departed detail, which characterize the mouldering leaves. Something like this is the feeling with which we read Sir Robert Peel's *Memoirs*. Who now doubts on the Catholic Question? It is no longer a "question". A younger generation has come into vigorous, perhaps into insolent, life, who regard the doubts that were formerly entertained as absurd, pernicious, delusive. To revive the controversy was an error. The accusations which are brought against a public man in his own age are rarely those echoed in after times. Posterity sees less or sees more. A few points stand forth in distinct rigidity, there is no idea of the countless accumulation, the collision of action, the web of human feeling, with which, in the day of their life, they were encompassed. Time changes much. The points of controversy seem clear; the assumed premises uncertain. The difficulty is to comprehend "the difficulty." Sir Robert Peel will have to answer to posterity, not for having passed

\* *Memoirs*, by the Right Hon Sir Robert Peel, Bart, M P, etc  
Published by the trustees of his papers, Lord Mahon (now Lord Stanhope) and the Right Hon Edward Cardwell, M P Part I "The Roman Catholic Question," 1828-29

Catholic emancipation when he did, but for having opposed it before ; not for having been precipitate, but for having been slow ; not for having taken "insufficient securities" for the Irish Protestant Church, but for having endeavoured to take security for an institution too unjust to be secured by laws or lawgivers

This memoir has, however, a deeper aim. Its end is rather personal than national. It is designed to show, not that Sir Robert did what was externally expedient—this was probably too plain—but that he himself really believed what he did to be right. The scene is laid not in Ireland, not in the county of Clare, not amid the gross triumphs of O'Connell, or the outrageous bogs of Tipperary, but in the Home Office, among files of papers, among the most correctly docketed memoranda, beside the minute which shows that Justice A should be dismissed, that Malefactor O ought not to be reprieved. It is labelled "My Conscience," and is designed to show that "my conscience" was sincere.

Seriously, and apart from jesting, this is no light matter. Not only does the great space which Sir Robert Peel occupied during many years in the history of the country entitle his character to the anxious attention of historical critics, but the very nature of that character itself, its traits, its deficiencies, its merits, are so congenial to the tendencies of our time and government, that to be unjust to him is to be unjust to all probable statesmen. We design to show concisely how this is

A constitutional statesman is in general a man of common opinions and uncommon abilities. The reason is obvious. When we speak of a free government, we mean a government in which the sovereign power is divided, in which a single decision is not absolute, where argument has an office. The essence of the *gouvernement des avocats*, as the Emperor Nicholas called it, is that you must persuade so many persons.

The appeal is not to the solitary decision of a single statesman ; not to Richelieu or Nesselrode alone in his closet ; but to the jangled mass of men, with a thousand pursuits, a thousand interests, a thousand various habits. Public opinion, as it is said, rules ; and public opinion is the opinion of the average man. Fox used to say of Burke : “ Burke is a wise man ; but he is wise too soon ” The average man will not bear this. He is a cool, common person, with a considerate air, with figures in his mind, with his own business to attend to, with a set of ordinary opinions arising from and suited to ordinary life. He can’t bear novelty or originalities. He says “ Sir, I never heard such a thing *before* in my life ” ; and he thinks this is a *reductio ad absurdum*. You may see his taste by the reading of which he approves. Is there a more splendid monument of talent and industry than *The Times* ? No wonder that the average man—that any one—believes in it. As Carlyle observes. “ Let the highest intellect able to write epics try to write such a leader for the morning newspapers, it cannot do it ; the highest intellect will fail ” But did you ever see anything there you had never seen before ? Out of the million articles that everybody has read, can any one person trace a single marked idea to a single article ? Where are the deep theories, and the wise axioms, and the everlasting sentiments which the writers of the most influential publication in the world have been the first to communicate to an ignorant species ? Such writers are far too shrewd. The two million, or whatever number of copies it may be, they publish, are not purchased because the buyers wish to know new truth. The purchaser desires an article which he can appreciate at sight, which he can lay down and say, “ An excellent article, very excellent ; exactly my own sentiments.” Original theories give trouble ; besides, a grave man on the Coal Exchange does not desire to be an apostle of novelties among the contemporaneous dealers in

fuel ;—he wants to be provided with remarks he can make on the topics of the day which will not be known *not* to be his ; that are not too profound ; which he can fancy the paper only reminded him of. And just in the same way, precisely as the most popular political paper is not that which is abstractedly the best or most instructive, but that which most exactly takes up the minds of men where it finds them, catches the floating sentiment of society, puts it in such a form as society can fancy would convince another society which did not believe—so the most influential of constitutional statesmen is the one who most felicitously expresses the creed of the moment, who administers it, who embodies it in laws and institutions, who gives it the highest life it is capable of, who induces the average man to think, “ I could not have done it any better if I had had time myself.”

It might be said that this is only one of the results of that tyranny of commonplace which seems to accompany civilization. You may talk of the tyranny of Nero and Tiberius, but the real tyranny is the tyranny of your next-door neighbour. What law is so cruel as the law of doing what he does ? What yoke is so galling as the necessity of being like him ? What *espionage* of despotism comes to your door so effectually as the eye of the man who lives at your door ? Public opinion is a permeating influence, and it exacts obedience to itself ; it requires us to think other men’s thoughts, to speak other men’s words, to follow other men’s habits. Of course, if we do not, no formal ban issues, no corporeal pain, no coarse penalty of a barbarous society is inflicted on the offender ; but we are called “ eccentric ” ; there is a gentle murmur of “ most unfortunate ideas,” “ singular young man,” “ well-intentioned, I dare say, but unsafe, sir, quite unsafe.” The prudent, of course, conform. The place of nearly everybody depends on the opinion of every one else. There is nothing like Swift’s precept to attain the repute

of a sensible man, "Be of the opinion of the person with whom, at the time, you are conversing" This world is given to those whom this world can trust. Our very conversation is infected Where are now the bold humour, the explicit statement, the grasping dogmatism of former days? They have departed, and you read in the orthodox works dreary regrets that the *art* of conversation has passed away. It would be as reasonable to expect the art of walking to pass away. People talk well enough when they know to whom they are speaking. We might even say that the art of conversation was improved by an application to new circumstances "Secret your intellect, use common words, say what you are expected to say," and you shall be at peace The secret of prosperity in common life is to be commonplace on principle

Whatever truth there may be in these splenetic observations might be expected to show itself more particularly in the world of politics. People dread to be thought unsafe in proportion as they get their living by being thought to be safe "Literary men," it has been said, "are outcasts", and they are eminent in a certain way notwithstanding. "They can say strong things of their age, for no one expects they will go out and act on them" They are a kind of ticket-of-leave lunatics, from whom no harm is for the moment expected; who seem quiet, but on whose vagaries a practical public must have its eye For statesmen it is different—they must be thought men of judgment. The most morbidly agricultural counties were aggrieved when Mr. Disraeli was made Chancellor of the Exchequer. They could not believe he was a man of solidity; and they could not comprehend taxes by the author of *Coningsby*, or sums by an adherent of the Caucasus "There is," said Sir Walter Scott, "a certain hypocrisy of action, which, however it is despised by certain persons intrinsically excellent, will nevertheless be cultivated by those who desire the good

repute of men Politicians, as has been said, live in the repute of the commonalty. They may appeal to posterity ; but of what use is posterity ? Years before that tribunal comes into life, your life will be extinct. It is like a moth going into Chancery. Those who desire a public career must look to the views of the living public ; an immediate exterior influence is essential to the exertion of their faculties. The confidence of others is your *fulcrum*. You cannot—many people wish you could—go into parliament to represent yourself. You must conform to the opinions of the electors ; and they, depend on it, will not be original. In a word, as has been most wisely observed, “ under free institutions it is necessary occasionally to defer to the opinions of other people , and as other people are obviously in the wrong, this is a great hindrance to the improvement of our political system and the progress of our species ”

Seriously, it is a calamity that this is so Occasions arise in which a different sort of statesman is required. A year or two ago we had one of these If any politician had come forward in this country, on the topic of the war, with prepared intelligence, distinct views, strong will, commanding mastery, it would have brought support to anxious intellects, and comfort to a thousand homes None such came Our people would have statesmen who thought as they thought, believed as they believed, acted as they would have acted They had desired to see their own will executed There came a time when they had no clear will, no definite opinion They reaped as they had sown As they had selected an administrative tool, of course it did not turn out a heroic leader.

If we wanted to choose an illustration of these remarks out of all the world, it would be Sir Robert Peel. No man has come so near our definition of a constitutional statesman—the powers of a first-rate man and the creed of a second-rate man From a certain peculiarity of

intellect and fortune, he was never in advance of his time. Of almost all the great measures with which his name is associated, he attained great eminence as an opponent before he attained even greater eminence as their advocate. On the corn laws, on the currency, on the amelioration of the criminal code, on Catholic emancipation—the subject of the memoir before us—he was not one of the earliest labourers or quickest converts. He did not bear the burden and heat of the day; other men laboured, and he entered into their labours. As long as these questions remained the property of first-class intellects, as long as they were confined to philanthropists or speculators, as long as they were only advocated by austere, intangible Whigs, Sir Robert Peel was against them. So soon as these same measures, by the progress of time, the striving of understanding, the conversion of receptive minds, became the property of second-class intellects, Sir Robert Peel became possessed of them also. He was converted at the conversion of the average man. His creed was, as it had ever been, ordinary; but his extraordinary abilities never showed themselves so much. He forthwith wrote his name on each of those questions, so that it will be remembered as long as they are remembered.

Nor is it merely on these few measures that Sir Robert Peel's mind must undoubtedly have undergone a change. The lifetime of few Englishmen has been more exactly commensurate with a change of public opinion—a total revolution of political thought. Hardly any fact in history is so incredible as that forty and a few years ago England was ruled by Mr. Perceval. It seems almost the same as being ruled by the *Record* newspaper. He had the same poorness of thought, the same petty Conservatism, the same dark and narrow superstition. His quibbling mode of oratory seems to have been scarcely agreeable to his friends; his impotence in political speculation moves the wrath—

destroys the patience—of the quietest reader now. Other ministers have had great connections, or great estates, to compensate for the contractedness of their minds. Mr. Perceval was only a poorish *nisi prius* lawyer; and there is no kind of human being so disagreeable, so teasing, to the gross Tory nature. He is not entitled to any glory for our warlike successes: on the contrary, he did his best to obtain failure by starving the Duke of Wellington, and plaguing him with petty vexations. His views in religion inclined to that Sabbatarian superstition which is of all creeds the most alien to the firm and genial English nature. The mere fact of such a premier being endured shows how deeply the whole national spirit and interest was absorbed in the contest with Napoleon, how little we understood the sort of man who should regulate its conduct—"in the crisis of Europe," as Sydney Smith said, "he safely brought the Curates' Salaries Improvement Bill to a hearing"—and it still more shows the horror of all innovation which the recent events of French history had impressed on our wealthy and comfortable classes. They were afraid of catching revolution, as old women of catching cold. Sir Archibald Alison to this day holds that revolution is an infectious disease, beginning no one knows how, and going no one knows where. There is but one rule of escape, explains the great historian, "Stay still, don't move; do what you have been accustomed to do, and consult your grandmother on everything" In 1812 the English people were all persuaded of this theory. Mr. Perceval was the most narrow-minded and unaltering man they could find he therefore represented their spirit, and they put him at the head of the state.

Such was the state of political questions. How little of real thoughtfulness was then applied to what we now call social questions cannot be better illustrated than by the proceedings on the occasion of Mr. Perceval's death. Bellingham, who killed him, was, whether

punishable or not, as clearly insane as a lunatic can be who offends against the laws of his country. He had no idea of killing Mr. Perceval particularly. His only idea was, that he had lost some property in Russia, that the English government would never repay him his loss in Russia, and he endeavoured to find some cabinet minister to shoot as a compensation. Lord Eldon lived under the belief that he had nearly been the victim himself, and told some story of a borrowed hat and an assistant's greatcoat to which he ascribed his preservation. The whole affair was a monomaniac's delusion. Bellingham had no ground for expecting any repayment. There was no reason for ascribing his pecuniary ruin to the government of that day, any more than to the government of this day. Indeed, if he had been alive now, it would have been agreed that he was a particularly estimable man. Medical gentlemen would have been examined for days on the doctrine of "irresistible impulse," "moral insanity," "instinctive pistol discharges," and every respectful sympathy would have been shown to so curious an offender. Whether he was punishable or not may be a question; but all will now agree that it was not a case for the punishment of death. In that day there was no more doubt that he ought to be hanged, than there would now be that he ought on no account to be hanged. The serious reasons, of which the scientific theories above alluded to are but the exaggerated resemblance, which indicate the horrible cruelty of inflicting on those who do not know what they do the extreme penalty of suffering meant for those who perpetrate the worst they can conceive, are in these years so familiar that we can hardly conceive their being unknown. Yet the Tory historian \* has to regret "that the motion, so earnestly insisted on by his counsel, to have the trial postponed for some days, to obtain evidence to establish his in-

\* Alison

sanity, was not acceded to ; that a judicial proceeding requiring beyond all others the most calm and deliberate consideration, should have been hurried over with a precipitation which, if not illegal, was at least unusual ” ; and a noble lord “ improved ” the moment of the assassination by exclaiming to the peers in opposition, “ You see, my lords, the consequence of your agitating the question of *Catholic emancipation*.” To those who now know England, it seems scarcely possible that this could have occurred here only forty-four years since. It was in such a world that Sir Robert Peel commenced his career. He was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time of Mr Perceval’s assassination.

It is not, however, to be imagined that, even if Mr Perceval had lived, his power would have very long endured. It passed to milder and quieter men. It passed to such men as Lord Liverpool and Mr Peel. The ruling power at that time in England, as for many years before, as even in some measure, though far less, now, was the class of aristocratic gentry ; by which we do not mean to denote only the aristocracy, and do not mean to exclude the aristocracy, but to indicate the great class of hereditary landed proprietors, who are in sympathy with the House of Lords on cardinal points, yet breathe a somewhat freer air, are more readily acted on by the opinion of the community, more contradictable by the lower herd, and less removed from their prejudices by a refined and regulated education. From the time of the Revolution, more or less, this has been the ruling class of the community ; the close-borough system and the county system giving them mainly the control of the House of Commons, and their feeling being in general, as it were, a mean term between those of the higher nobility and the trading public of what were then the few large towns. The rule of the House of Lords was rather mediate than direct. By those various means of influence and social patronage and oppression which are familiar to a wealthy and

high-bred aristocracy, the highest members of it, of course, did exercise over all below them a sure and continual influence ; it worked silently and commonly on ordinary questions and in quiet times ; yet it was liable to be overborne by a harsher and ruder power when stormy passions arose, in the days of wars and tumults. So far as the actual selection of visible rulers goes, the largest amount of administrative power has rarely been in the hands of the highest aristocracy, and in a great measure for a peculiar reason. that aristocracy rarely will do the work, and rarely can do the work. The enormous pressure of daily-growing business which besets the governors of a busy and complicated community is too much for the refined habits, delicate discrimination, anxious judgment, which the course of their life develops in the highest classes, and with which it nourishes the indolence natural to those who have this world to enjoy. The real strain of the necessary labour has generally been borne by men of a somewhat lower grade, trained by an early ambition, a native aptitude, a hardy competition, to perform its copious tasks. Such men are partakers of two benefits. They are rough and ready enough to accomplish the coarse, enormous daily work, they have lived with men of higher rank enough to know and feel what such persons think and want. Sir Robert Walpole is the type of this class. He was a Norfolk squire, and not a nobleman ; he was bred a gentleman, and yet was quite coarse enough for any business : his career was what you would expect. For very many years he administered the government much as the aristocracy wished and desired. *They* were, so to speak, the directors of the company which is called the English nation ; they met a little and talked a little, but Sir Robert was the manager, who knew all the facts, came every day, saw everybody, and was everything.

Passing over the time of Lord Liverpool, of whom this is not now the place to speak, some such destiny

as this would, in his first political life, have appeared likely to be that of Sir Robert Peel. If an acute master of the betting art had been asked the "favourite" statesman who was likely to rule in that generation, he would undoubtedly have selected Sir Robert. He was rich, decorous, laborious, and had devoted himself regularly to the task. There was no other such man. It was likely, at least to superficial observers, that his name would descend to posterity as the "Sir Robert" of a new time;—a time changed, indeed, from that of Walpole, but resembling it in its desire to be ruled by a great administrator, skilful in all kinds of business transactions, yet associated with the aristocracy; by one unremarkable in his opinions, but remarkable in his powers. The fates, however, designed Peel for a very different destiny; and to a really close observer there were signs in his horoscope which should have clearly revealed it. Sir Robert's father and grandfather were two of the men who created Lancashire. No sooner did the requisite machinery issue from the brain of the inventor, than its capabilities were seized on by strong, ready, bold men of business, who erected it, used it, devised a factory system, combined a factory population—created, in a word, that black industrial region, of whose augmenting wealth and horrid labour tales are daily borne to the genial and lazy south. Of course, it cannot be said that mill-makers invented the middle classes. The history of England perhaps shows that it has not for centuries been without an unusual number of persons with comfortable and moderate means. But though this class has ever been found among us, and has ever been more active than in any other similar country, yet to a great extent it was scattered, headless, motionless. Small rural out-of-the-way towns, country factories few and far between, concealed and divided this great and mixed mass of petty means and steady intelligence. The huge heaps of manufacturing wealth were not to be concealed.

They at once placed on a level with the highest in the land—in matters of expenditure, and in those countless social relations which depend upon expenditure—in a sprung from the body of the people, unmistakably speaking its language, inevitably thinking its thoughts. It is true that the first manufacturers were not democratic Sir Robert Peel, the statesman's father—a type of the class—was a firm, honest, domineering Conservative, but, however on such topics they may so think, however on other topics they may try to catch the language of the class to which they rise, the grain of the middle class will surely show itself in those who have risen from the middle class. If Mr. Cobden were to go over to the enemy, if he were to offer to serve Lord Derby *vice* Disraeli disconcerted, it would not be possible for him to speak as the hereditary land-owner speaks. It is not that the hereditary landowner knows more;—indeed, either in book-learning or in matters of observation, in acquaintance with what has been, or is going to be, or what now is, the owners of rent are not superior to the receivers of profits; yet their dialect is different—the one speaks the language of years of toil, and the other of years of indolence. A harsh laboriousness characterizes the one, a pleasant geniality the other. The habit of industry is ingrained in those who have risen by it; it modifies every word and qualifies every notion. They are the *βούρροι* of work. Vainly, therefore, did the first manufacturers struggle to be Conservatives, to be baronets, to be peers. The titles they might obtain, their outward existence they might change, themselves in a manner they might alter, but a surer force was dragging them and those who resembled them into another region, filling them with other thoughts, making them express what people of the middle classes had always obscurely felt, pushing forward this new industrial order by the side, or even in front, of the old aristocratic order. The new class have not, indeed, shown themselves republican. They

have not especially cared to influence the machinery of government. Their peculiarity has been, that they wished to see the government administered according to the notions familiar to them in their business life. They have no belief in mystery or magic, probably they have never appreciated the political influence of the imagination; they wish to see plain sense applied to the most prominent part of practical life. In his later career, the second Sir Robert Peel was the statesman who most completely and thoroughly expressed the sentiments of this new dynasty,—instead of being the nominee of a nobility, he became the representative of a transacting and trading multitude.

Both of these two classes were, however, equally possessed by the vice or tendency we commented on at the outset. They each of them desired to see the government carried on exactly according to their own views. The idea on which seems to rest our only chance of again seeing great statesmen, of placing deep deferential trust in those who have given real proofs of comprehensive sagacity, had scarcely dawned on either. The average man had, so to say, varied he was no longer of the one order, but of an inferior; but he was not at all less exacting or tyrannical. Perhaps he was even more so; for the indolent gentleman is less absolute and domineering than the active man of business. However that may be, it was the fate of Sir Robert Peel, in the two phases of his career, to take a leading share in carrying out the views, in administering the creed, first of one and then of the other.

Perhaps in our habitual estimate of Peel we hardly enough bear this in mind. We remember him as the guiding chief of the most intelligent Conservative government that this country has ever seen. We remember the great legislative acts which we owe to his trained capacity, every detail of which bears the impress of his practised hand; we know that his name is pronounced with applause in the great marts of trade and seats of

industry ; that even yet it is muttered with reproach in the obscure abodes of squires and rectors. We forget that his name was once the power of the Protestant interest, the shibboleth by which squires and rectors distinguished those whom they loved from those whom they hated ; we forget that he defended the Manchester Massacre, the Six Acts, the Imposition of Tests, the rule of Orangemen. We remember Peel as the proper head of a moderate, intelligent, half-commercial community ; we forget that he once was the chosen representative of a gentry untrained to great affairs, absorbed in a great war, only just recovering from the horror of a great revolution.

In truth, the character of Sir Robert Peel happily fitted him both to be the chosen head of a popular community, imperiously bent on its own ideas, and to be the head of that community in shifting and changing times. Sir Robert was at Harrow with Lord Byron, who has left the characteristic reminiscence : "I was always in scrapes, Peel never." And opposed as they were in their fortunes as boys and men, they were at least equally contrasted in the habit and kind of action of their minds. Lord Byron's mind gained everything it was to gain by one intense, striking effort. By a blow of the imagination he elicited a single bright spark of light on every subject ; and that was all. And this he never lost. The intensity of the thinking seemed to burn it on the memory, there to remain alone. But he made no second effort ; he gained no more. He always avowed his incapability of continuous application : he could not, he said, learn the grammar of any language. In later life he showed considerable talent for action ; but those who had to act with him observed that, versatile as were his talents, and mutable as his convictions had always seemed to be, in reality he was the most stubborn of men. He heard what you had to say ; assented to all you had to say ; and the next morning returned to his original opinion. No amount

of ordinary argumentative resistance was so hopeless as that facile acquiescence and instantaneous recurrence. The truth was, that he was—and some others are similarly constituted—unable to retain anything which he did not at any rate *seem* to gain by the unaided single rush of his own mind. The ideas of such minds are often not new, very often they are hardly in the strictest sense original; they really were very much suggested from without, and preserved in some obscure corner of memory, out of the way and unknown; but it remains their characteristic, that they seem to the mind of the thinker to be born from its own depths, to be the product of its latent forces. There is a kind of eruption of ideas from a subter-conscious world. The whole mental action is volcanic; the lava flood glows in *Childe Harold*, all the thoughts are intense, flung forth vivid. The day after the eruption the mind is calm; it seems as if it could not again do the like, the product only remains, distinct, peculiar, indestructible. The mind of Peel was the exact opposite of this. His opinions far more resembled the daily accumulating insensible deposits of a rich alluvial soil. The great stream of time flows on with all things on its surface, and slowly, grain by grain, a mould of wise experience is unconsciously left on the still, extended intellect. You scarcely think of such a mind as acting; it seems always acted upon. There is no trace of gushing, overpowering, spontaneous impulse; everything seems acquired. The thoughts are calm. In Lord Byron, the very style—dashing, free, incisive—shows the bold impulse from which it came. The stealthy accumulating words of Peel seem like the quiet leavings of an outward tendency, which brought these, but might as well have brought others. There is no peculiar stamp either in the ideas. They might have been any one's ideas. They belong to the general diffused stock of observations which are to be found in the civilized world. They are not native to the particular mind,

nor "to the manner born" Like a science, they are credible or incredible by all men equally This *secondary* order, as we may call it, of intellect is evidently most useful to a statesman of the constitutional class, such as we have described him. He insensibly and inevitably takes in and imbibes, by means of it, the ideas of those around him If he were left in a vacuum, he would have no ideas. The primary class of mind that strikes out its own belief would here be utterly at fault It would want something which other men had ; it would discover something which other men would not understand Sir Robert Peel was a statesman for forty years ; under our constitution, Lord Byron, eminent as was his insight into men, and remarkable as was his power, at least for short periods, of dealing with them, would not have been a statesman for forty days.

It is very likely that many people may not think Sir Robert Peel's mind so interesting as Lord Byron's. They may prefer the self-originating intellect, which invents and retains its own ideas, to the calm, receptive intellect which acquires its belief from without. The answer lies in what has been said—a constitutional statesman must sympathize in the ideas of the many As the many change, it will be his good fortune if he can contrive to change with them It is to be remembered that statesmen do not live under hermetical seals Like other men, they are influenced by the opinions of other men How potent is this influence, those best know who have tried to hold ideas different from the ideas of those around

In another point of view also Sir Robert Peel's character was exactly fitted to the position we have delineated He was a great administrator. Civilization requires this In a simple age work may be difficult, but it is scarce There are fewer people, and everybody wants fewer things The mere tools of civilization seem in some sort to augment work In early times, when a despot wishes to govern a distant province he

sends down a satrap on a grand horse, with other people on little horses ; and very little is heard of the satrap again unless he send back some of the little people to tell what he has been doing. No great labour of superintendence is possible. Common rumour and casual complaints are the sources of intelligence. If it seems certain that the province is in a bad state, satrap No. 1 is recalled, and satrap No. 2 is sent out in his stead. In civilized countries the whole thing is different. You erect a *bureau* in the province you want to govern ; you make it write letters and copy letters ; it sends home eight reports per diem to the head *bureau* in St. Petersburg. Nobody does a sum in the province without somebody doing the same sum in the capital, to "check him," and see that he does it correctly. The consequence of this is to throw on the heads of departments an amount of reading and labour which can only be accomplished by the greatest natural aptitude, the most efficient training, the most firm and regular industry. Under a free government it is by no means better, perhaps in some respects it is worse. It is true that many questions which, under the French despotism, are referred to Paris, are settled in England on the very spot where they are to be done, without reference to London at all. But as a set-off, a constitutional administrator has to be always consulting others, finding out what this man or that man chooses to think ; learning which form of error is believed by Lord B., which by Lord C. ; adding up the errors of the alphabet, and seeing what portion of what he thinks he ought to do, they will all of them together allow him to do. Likewise, though the personal freedom and individual discretion which free governments allow to their subjects seem at first likely to diminish the work which those governments have to do, it may be doubted whether it does so really and in the end. Individual discretion strikes out so many more pursuits, and some supervision must be maintained over each of those pursuits. No

despotic government would consider the police force of London enough to keep down, watch, and superintend such a population ; but then no despotic government would have such a city as London to keep down. The freedom of growth allows the possibility of growth ; and though liberal governments take so much less in proportion upon them, yet the scale of operations is so much enlarged by the continual exercise of civil liberty, that the real work is ultimately perhaps as immense. While a despotic government is regulating ten per cent. of ten men's actions, a free government has to regulate one per cent of a hundred men's actions. The difficulty, too, increases Anybody can understand a rough, despotic community,—a small buying class of nobles, a small selling class of traders, a large producing class of serfs, are much the same in all quarters of the globe ; but a free, intellectual community is a complicated network of ramified relations, interlacing and passing hither and thither, old and new—some of fine city weaving, other of gross agricultural construction You are never sure what effect any force or any change may produce on a framework so exquisite and so involved. Govern it as you may, it will be a work of great difficulty, labour, and responsibility ; and no man who is thus occupied ought ever to go to bed without reflecting that from the difficulty of his employment he may, probably enough, have that day done more evil than good. What view Sir Robert Peel took of these duties he has himself informed us

“ Take the case of the Prime Minister. You must presume that he reads every important dispatch from every foreign court. He cannot consult with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and exercise the influence which he ought to have with respect to the conduct of foreign affairs, unless he be master of everything of real importance passing in that department. It is the same with respect to other departments ; India for instance : How can the Prime Minister be

able to judge of the course of policy with regard to India, unless he be cognizant of all the current important correspondence? In the case of Ireland and the Home Department it is the same. Then the Prime Minister has the patronage of the Crown to exercise, which you say, and justly say, is of so much importance and of so much value; he has to make inquiries into the qualifications of the persons who are candidates, he has to conduct the whole of the communications with the Sovereign, he has to write, probably with his own hand, the letters in reply to all persons of station who address themselves to him; he has to receive deputations on public business, during the sitting of parliament he is expected to attend six or seven hours a day, and for four or five days in the week; at least, he is blamed if he is absent."

The necessary effect of all this labour is, that those subject to it have no opinions. It requires a great deal of time to have opinions. Belief is a slow process. That leisure which the poets say is necessary to be good, or to be wise, is needful for the humbler task of allowing respectable maxims to take root respectably. The "wise passiveness" of Mr. Wordsworth is necessary in very ordinary matters. If you chain a man's head to a ledger, and keep him constantly adding up, and take a pound off his salary whenever he stops, you can't expect him to have a sound conviction on Catholic emancipation or tithes, and original ideas on the Transcaucasian provinces. Our system, indeed, seems expressly provided to make it unlikely. The most benumbing thing to the intellect is routine; the most bewildering is distraction: our system is a distracting routine. You see this in the description just given, which is not exhaustive. Sir Robert Peel once requested to have a number of questions carefully written down which they asked him one day in succession in the House of Commons. They seemed a list of everything that could occur in the British Empire, or to the

brain of a member of parliament. A premier's whole life is a series of such transitions. It is wonderful that our public men have any minds left, rather than that a certain unfixity of opinion seems growing upon them.

We may go further on this subject. A great administrator is not a man likely to desire to have fixed opinions. His natural bent and tendency is to immediate action. The existing and pressing circumstances of the case fill up his mind. The letters to be answered, the documents to be filed, the memoranda to be made, engross his attention. He is angry if you distract him. A bold person who suggests a matter of principle, or a difficulty of thought, or an abstract result that seems improbable in the case "before the board," will be set down as a speculator, a theorist, a troubler of practical life. To expect to hear from such men profound views of future policy, digested plans of distant action, is to mistake their genius entirely. It is like asking the broker of the Stock Exchange what will be the price of the funds this day six months! His whole soul is absorbed in thinking what that price will be in ten minutes. A momentary change of an eighth is more important to him than a distant change of a hundred eighths. So the brain of a great administrator is naturally occupied with the details of the day, the passing dust, the granules of that day's life; and his unforeseeing temperament turns away uninterested from reaching speculations, from vague thought, and from extensive and far-off plans. Of course, it is not meant that a great administrator has absolutely no general views; some indeed he must have. A man cannot conduct the detail of affairs without having some plan which regulates that detail. He cannot help having some idea, vague or accurate, indistinct or distinct, of the direction in which he is going, and the purpose for which he is travelling. But the difference is, that his plan is seldom his own, the offspring of his own brain, the result of his own mental contention, it is the plan of some one else. Prov-

dence generally bestows on the working adaptive man a quiet, adoptive nature. He receives insensibly the suggestions of others ; he hears them with willing ears , he accepts them with placid belief. An acquiescent credulity is a quality of such men's nature ; they cannot help being sure that what every one says must be true ; the *vox populi* is a part of their natural religion. It has been made a matter of wonder that Peel should have belonged to the creed of Mr. Perceval and Lord Sidmouth. Perhaps, indeed, our existing psychology will hardly explain the process by which a decorous young man acquires the creed of his era. He assumes its belief as he assumes its costume. He imitates the respectable classes. He avoids an original opinion, like an *outré* coat ; a new idea, like an unknown tie. Especially he does so on matters of real concern to him, on those on which he knows he must act. He acquiesces in the creed of the orthodox agents. He scarcely considers for himself ; he acknowledges the apparent authority of dignified experience. He is, he remembers, but the junior partner in the firm , it does not occur to him to doubt that those were right who were occupied in its management years before him. In this way he acquires an experience which more independent and original minds are apt to want. There was a great cry when the Whigs came into office, at the time of the Reform Bill, that they were not men of business. Of course, after a very long absence from office, they could not possess a technical acquaintance with official forms, a trained facility in official action. This Sir Robert Peel acquired from his apprenticeship to Mr. Perceval. His early connection with the narrow Conservative party has been considered a disadvantage to him ; but it may well be doubted whether his peculiar mind was not more improved by the administrative training than impaired by the contact with prejudiced thoughts. He never could have been a great thinker ; he became what nature designed, a great agent.

In a third respect also Sir Robert Peel conformed to the type of a constitutional statesman, and that third respect also seems naturally to lead to a want of defined principle, and to apparent fluctuation of opinion. He was a great debater, and of all pursuits ever invented by man for separating the faculty of argument from the capacity of belief, the art of debating is probably the most effectual. Macaulay tells us that, in his opinion, this is "the most serious of the evils which are to be set off against the many blessings of popular government. The keenest and most vigorous minds of every generation, minds often admirably fitted for the investigation of truth, are habitually employed in producing arguments such as no man of sense would ever put into a treatise intended for publication—arguments which are just good enough to be used once, when aided by fluent delivery and pointed language. The habit of discussing questions in this way necessarily reacts on the intellects of our ablest men, particularly of those who are introduced into parliament at a very early age, before their minds have expanded to full maturity. The talent for debate is developed in such men to a degree which, to the multitude, seems as marvellous as the performances of an Italian *improvvisatore*. But they are fortunate indeed if they retain unimpaired the faculties which are required for close reasoning, or for enlarged speculation. Indeed, we should sooner expect a great original work on political science—such a work, for example, as *The Wealth of Nations*—from an apothecary in a country town, or from a minister in the Hebrides, than from a statesman who, ever since he was one and twenty, had been a distinguished debater in the House of Commons." But it may well be doubted whether there is not in the same pursuit a deeper evil, hard to eradicate, and tending to corrupt and destroy the minds of those who are beneath its influence. Constitutional statesmen are obliged, not only to employ arguments which they do not think conclusive, but like-

wise to defend opinions which they do not believe to be true. Whether we approve it or lament it, there is no question that our existing political life is deeply marked by the habit of advocacy. Perhaps fifteen measures may annually, on an average, be brought in by a cabinet government of fifteen persons. It is impossible to believe that all members of that cabinet agree in all those measures. No two people agree in fifteen things; fifteen clever men never yet agreed in anything; yet they all defend them, argue for them, are responsible for them. It is always quite possible that the minister who is strenuously defending a bill in the House of Commons may have used in the cabinet the very arguments which the Opposition are using in the House; he may have been overruled without being convinced; he may still think the conclusions he opposes better than those which he inculcates. It is idle to say that he ought to go out; at least, it amounts to saying that government by means of a cabinet is impossible. The object of a committee of that kind is to agree on certain conclusions; if every member after the meeting were to start off according to the individual bent and bias of his mind, according to his own individual discretion or indiscretion, the previous concurrence would have become childish. Of course, the actual measure proposed by the collective voice of several persons is very different from what any one of these persons would of himself wish; it is the result of a compromise between them. Each, perhaps, has obtained some concession, each has given up something. Every one sees in the actual proposal something of which he strongly disapproves; every one regrets the absence of something which he much desires. Yet, on the whole, perhaps, he thinks the measure better than no measure; or at least he thinks that if he went out, it would break up the government; and imagines it to be of more consequence that the government should be maintained than that the particular measure

should be rejected. He concedes his individual judgment. No one has laid this down with more distinctness than Sir Robert Peel. "Supposing a person at a dinner-table to express his private opinion of a measure originating with a party with whom he is united in public life, is he, in the event of giving up that private opinion out of deference to his party, to be exposed to a charge almost amounting to dishonesty? The idea is absurd—What is the every-day conduct of government itself? Is there any one in this House so ignorant as to suppose that on all questions cabinet ministers, who yield to the decision of their colleagues, speak and act in parliament in strict conformity with the opinions they have expressed in the cabinet? If ministers are to be taunted on every occasion that they hold opinions in the cabinet different from what they do in this House, and if parliament is to be made the scene of these taunts, I believe I should not be going too far in saying the House would have time for little else. It is the uniform practice with all governments, and I should be sorry to think the practice carries any stain with it, for a member of the administration who chances to entertain opinions differing from those of the majority of his colleagues, rather than separate himself from them, to submit to be overruled, and even though he do not fully concur in their policy, to give his support to the measures which, as an administration, they promulgate. I will give the House an instance of this fact. It was very generally reported on a late occasion, that upon the question of sending troops to Portugal a strong difference of opinion took place in the cabinet. Now would it, I ask, be either just or fair to call on those who, in the discussion of the cabinet, had spoken in favour of sending out troops to aid the cause of Donna Maria, to come down, and in parliament advocate that measure in opposition to the decision of their colleagues? No one would think of doing so." It may not carry a stain; but it is a painful idea.

It is evident, too, that this necessarily leads to great apparent changes of opinion—to the professed belief of a statesman at one moment being utterly different from what it seems to be at another moment. When a government is founded, questions A, B, C, D, E, F, are the great questions of the day—the matters which are obvious, pressing—which the public mind comprehends X, Y, Z, are in the background, little thought of, obscure. According to the received morality, no statesman would hesitate to sacrifice the last to the first. He might have a very strong personal opinion on X, but he would surrender it to a colleague as the price of his co-operation on A or B. A few years afterwards times change. Question A is carried, B settles itself, E and F are forgotten, X becomes the most important topic of the day. The statesman who conceded X before, now feels that he no longer can concede it, there is no equivalent. He has never in reality changed his opinion, yet he has to argue in favour of the very measures which he endeavoured before to argue against. Everybody thinks he has changed, and without going into details, the secrecy of which is esteemed essential to confidential co-operation, it is impossible that he can evince his consistency. It is impossible to doubt that this is a very serious evil, and it is plainly one consequent on, or much exaggerated by, a popular and argumentative government. It is very possible for a conscientious man, under a bureaucratic government, to co-operate with the rest of a council in the elaboration and execution of measures, many of which he thinks inexpedient. Nobody asks him his opinion; he has not to argue, or defend, or persuade. But a free government boasts that it is carried on in the face of day. Its principle is discussion; its habit is debate. The consequence is, that those who conduct it have to defend measures they disapprove, to object to measures they approve, to appear to have an accurate opinion on points on which they really have no opinion. The calling of a

constitutional statesman is very much that of a political advocate, he receives a new brief with the changing circumstances of each successive day. It is easy to conceive a cold sardonic intellect, moved with contempt at such a life, casting aside the half-and-half pretences with which others partly deceive themselves, stating anything, preserving an intellectual preference for truth, but regarding any effort at its special advocacy as the weak aim of foolish men, striving for what they cannot attain. Lord Lyndhurst has shown us that it is possible to lead the life of Lord Lyndhurst. One can conceive, too, a cold and somewhat narrow intellect, capable of forming, in any untroubled scene, an accurate plain conviction, but without much power of entering into the varying views of others, little skilled in diversified argument; understanding its own opinion, and not understanding the opinions of others;—one can imagine such a mind pained, and cracked, and shattered, by endeavouring to lead a life of ostentatious argument in favour of others' opinions, of half-concealment of its chill, unaltering essence. It will be for posterity to make due allowance for the variance between the character and the position of Lord John Russell.

Sir Robert Peel was exactly fit for this life. The word which exactly fits his oratory is—specious. He hardly ever said anything which struck you in a moment to be true; he never uttered a sentence which for a moment anybody could deny to be plausible. Once, when they were opposed on a railway bill, the keen irascibility of Lord Derby stimulated him to observe “that *no one* knew like the right honourable baronet how to *dress up* a case for that House.” The art of statement, the power of detail, the watching for the weak points of an opponent, an average style adapting itself equally to what the speaker believed and what he disbelieved, a business air, a didactic precision for what it was convenient to make clear, an unctuous disguise of flowing periods, and “a deep sense of responsibility”

for what it was convenient to conceal, an enormous facility, made Sir Robert Peel a nearly unequalled master of the art of political advocacy. For his times he was perhaps quite unequalled. He might have failed in times of deep, outpouring patriotic excitement ; he had not nature enough to express it. He might have failed in an age when there was nothing to do, and when elegant personality and the *finesse* of artistic expression were of all things most required. But for an age of important business, when there was an unusual number of great topics to be discussed, but none great enough to hurry men away from their business habits, or awaken the most ardent passion or the highest imagination, there is nothing like the oratory of Peel—able but not aspiring, firm but not exalted, never great but ever adequate to great affairs. It is curious to know that he was trained to the trade.

“ Soon after Peel was born, his father, the first baronet, finding himself rising daily in wealth and consequence, and believing that money in those peculiar days could always command a seat in parliament, determined to bring up his son expressly for the House of Commons. When that son was quite a child, Sir Robert would frequently set him on the table and say, ‘ Now, Robin, make a speech and I will give you this cherry.’ What few words the little fellow produced were applauded ; and applause stimulating exertion produced such effects that, before Robin was ten years old, he could really address the company with some degree of eloquence. As he grew up, his father constantly took him every Sunday into his private room and made him repeat, as well as he could, the sermon which had been preached. Little progress in effecting this was made, and little was expected *at first*, but by steady perseverance the habit of attention grew powerful, and the sermon was repeated almost *verbatim*. When at a very distant day the senator, remembering accurately the speech of an opponent, answered his arguments in correct succession,

it was little known that the power of so doing was originally acquired in Drayton Church."

A mischievous observer might say that something else had remained to Sir Robert Peel from these sermons. His tone is a trifle sermonic. He failed where perhaps alone Lord John Russell has succeeded—in the oratory of conviction.

If we bear in mind the whole of these circumstances; if we picture in our minds a nature at once active and facile, easily acquiring its opinions from without, not easily devising them from within, a large, placid, adaptive intellect, devoid of irritable, intense originality, prone to forget the ideas of yesterday, inclined to accept the ideas of to-day—if we imagine a man so formed cast early into absorbing, exhausting industry of detail, with work enough to fill up a life, with action of itself enough to render speculation almost impossible—placed, too, in a position unsuited to abstract thought, of which the conventions and rules require that a man should feign other men's thoughts, should impugn his own opinions—we shall begin to imagine a conscientious man destitute of convictions on the occupations of his life—to comprehend the character of Sir Robert Peel.

That Sir Robert was a very conscientious man is quite certain. It is even probable that he had a morbid sense of administrative responsibility. We do not say that he was so weighed down as Lord Liverpool, who is alleged never to have opened his letters without a pang of foreboding that something had miscarried somewhere; but every testimony agrees that Sir Robert had an anxious sense of duty in detail. Lord Wellesley, somewhere in this volume, on an occasion when it would have been at least equally natural to speak of administrative capacity and efficient co-operation, mentions only "the real impressions which your kindness and high character have fixed in my mind." The circumstances of his end naturally produced a crowd of tributes to his memory, and hardly any of them omit his deep

sense of the obligations of action. The characteristic, too, is written conspicuously on every line of these memoirs. Disappointing and external as in some respects they seem, they all the more evidently bear witness to this trait. They read like the conscientious letters of an ordinary practical man ; the great statesman has little other notion than that it is his duty to transact his business well. As a conspicuous merit, the Duke of Wellington, oddly enough according to some people's notions at the time, selected Peel's veracity. "In the whole course of my communication with him I have never known an instance in which he did not show the strictest preference for truth. I never had, in the whole course of my life, the slightest reason for suspecting that he stated anything which he did not firmly believe to be the fact. I could not sit down without stating what I believe, after a long acquaintance, to have been his most striking characteristic." Simple people in the country were a little astonished to hear so strong a eulogy on a man for not telling lies. They were under the impression that people in general did not. But those who have considered the tempting nature of a statesman's pursuits, the secrets of office, the inevitable complication of his personal relations, will not be surprised that many statesmen should be without veracity, or that one should be eulogized for possessing it. It is to be remarked, however, in mitigation of so awful an excellence, that Sir Robert was seldom in "scrapes," and that it is on those occasions that the virtue of veracity is apt to be most severely tested. The same remark is applicable to the well-praised truthfulness of the duke himself.

In conjunction with the great soldier, Sir Robert Peel is entitled to the fame of a great act of administrative conscience. He purified the Tory party. There is little doubt that, during the long and secure reign which the Tories enjoyed about the beginning of the century, there was much of the corruption naturally incident to

a strong party with many adherents to provide for, uncontrolled by an effective Opposition, unwatched by a great nation. Of course, too, any government remaining over from the last century would inevitably have adhering to it various *remanet* corruptions of that curious epoch. There flourished those mighty sinecures and reversions, a few of which still remain to be the wonder and envy of an unenjoying generation. The House of Commons was not difficult then to manage. There is a legend that a distinguished Treasury official of the last century,\* a very capable man, used to say of any case which was hopelessly and inevitably bad: "Ah, we must apply our majority to this question"; and no argument is so effectual as the mechanical, calculable suffrage of a strong, unreasoning party. There were doubtless many excellent men in the Tory party, even in its least excellent days; but the two men to whom the party, as such, owes most of purification were the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. From the time when they became responsible for the management of a Conservative government, there was no doubt, in office or in the nation, that the public money and patronage were administered by men whom no consideration would induce to use either for their personal benefit, and who would, as far as their whole power lay, discourage and prevent the corrupt use of either by others. The process by which they succeeded in conveying this impression is illustrated by a chapter in the Dean of York's *Memoir of Peel*, in which that well-known dignitary recounts the temptations which he applied to the political purity of his relative

"While Peel was Secretary for Ireland, I asked him to give a very trifling situation, nominally in his gift, to a worthy person for whom I felt an interest. He wrote me word that he was really anxious to oblige me in this matter, but that a nobleman of much parliamentary interest, who

\* George Rose

supported the government, insisted upon his right to dispose of all patronage in his own neighbourhood. So anxious was Peel to show his good will towards me, that he prevailed upon the Lord-Lieutenant to ask as a favour from the aforesaid nobleman that the situation might be given to my nominee. but the marquis replied that the situation was of no value, yet, to prevent a dangerous precedent, he must refuse the application

“ In times long after, when Sir Robert Peel became prime minister, I asked him often in the course of many years for situations for my sons, which situations were vacant and in his immediate gift I subjoin three letters which I received from him on these subjects; they were written after long intervals and at different periods, but they all speak the same language.

“ Whitehall, December 20.

“ MY DEAR DEAN OF YORK,—I thank you for your consideration of what you deem the unrequited sacrifice which I make in the public service. But I beg to say that my chief consolation and reward is the *consciousness* that my exertions are disinterested—that I have considered official patronage as a public trust, to be applied to the reward and encouragement of public service, or to the less praiseworthy, but still necessary, purpose of promoting the general interests of the government. That patronage is so wholly inadequate to meet the fair claims of a public nature, that are daily presented for my consideration, and that constitute the chief torment of office, that I can only overcome the difficulties connected with the distribution by the utmost forbearance as to deriving any personal advantage from it. If I had absolute control over the appointment to which you refer, I should apply it to the satisfaction of one or other of the engagements into which I entered when I formed the government, and which (from the absolute want of means) remain unfulfilled. But I have informed the numerous parties who have applied to me on the subject of that appointment, that I feel it to be my duty, on account of the present condition of the board and the functions they have to perform, to select for it some experienced man of business connected with the naval profession, or some man distinguished in that profession

“ Believe me, my dear Dean, affectionately yours,

“ ROBERT PEEL

" I applied again for another place of less importance : the answer was much the same as before

" Whitehall, April 5, 1843

" MY DEAR DEAN OF YORK,—I must dispose of the appointment to which you refer upon the same principle on which I have uniformly disposed of every appointment of a similar nature

" I do not consider patronage of this kind (and, indeed, I may truly say of all patronage) as the means of gratifying private wishes of any one Those who have made locally great sacrifices and great exertions for the maintenance of the political cause which they espouse have always been considered fairly entitled to be consulted in respect to the disposal of local patronage, and would justly complain if, in order to promote the interests of a relative of my own, I were to disregard their recommendations It would subject me to great personal embarrassment, and be a complete departure from the rule to which I have always adhered

" All patronage of all descriptions, so far from being of the least advantage personally to a minister, involves him in nothing but embarrassment

" Ever affectionately yours,

" ROBERT PEEL.

" I publish one more letter of the same kind, because all these letters exhibit the character of the writer, and contain matters of some public interest The distributor of stamps died in the very place where my son was resident, and where he and I had exerted considerable interest in assisting the government members I thought that now, perhaps, an exception might be made to the general rule, and I confidently recommended my eldest son for the vacancy. The following was the answer :

" Whitehall, May 1.

" MY DEAR DEAN,—Whatever arrangements may be made with respect to the office of distributor of stamps, lately held by Mr —, I do not feel myself justified in appropriating to myself any share of the local patronage

of a county with which I have not the remotest connection by property, or any other local tie

“ There are three members for the county of — who support the Government, and, in addition to the applications which I shall no doubt have from them, I have already received recommendations from the Duke of — and Earl —, each having certainly better claims than I have personally for local appointments in the county of —.

“ I feel it quite impossible to make so complete a departure from the principles on which I have invariably acted, and which I feel to be nothing more than consistent with common justice, as to take —shire offices for my own private purposes

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ ROBERT PEEL

“ These letters show the noble principle on which Sir Robert's public life was founded I am quite sure that he had a great regard for my sons. He invited them to his shooting quarters, was pleased to find them amusement, and made them many handsome presents, but he steadily refused to enrich them out of the public purse merely because they were his nephews Many prime ministers have not been so scrupulous ”

And clearly *one* divine wishes Sir Robert Peel had not been so

The changes of opinion which Sir Robert Peel underwent are often cited as indications of a want of conscientiousness. They really are, subject, of course, to the preceding remarks, proofs of his conscientiousness. We do not mean in the obvious sense of their being opposed to his visible interest, and having on two great occasions destroyed the most serviceable party organization ever ruled by a statesman in a political age, but in a more refined sense, the timeliness of his transitions may, without overstraining, be thought a mark of their *bona fides* He could not have changed with such felicitous exactness, if he had been guided by selfish calculation The problems were too great and too wide There have,

of course, been a few men—Talleyrand and Theramenes are instances—who have seemed to hit, as if by a political sense, the fitting moment to leave the side which was about to fall, and to join the side which was about to rise. But these will commonly be found to be men of a very different character from that of Peel. Minds are divided into open and close. Some men are so sensitive to extrinsic impressions, pass so easily from one man to another, catch so well the tone of each man's thought, use so well the opportunities of society for the purposes of affairs, that they are, as it were, by habit and practice, metrical instruments of public opinion. Sir Robert was by character, both natural and acquired, the very reverse. He was a reserved, occupied man of business. In the arts of society, in the easy transition from person to person, from tone to tone, he was but little skilled. If he had been left to pick up his rules of conduct by mere social perception and observation, his life would have been a life of miscalculations; instead of admiring the timeliness of his conversions, we should wonder at the perversity of his transitions. The case is not new. In ancient times, at a remarkable moment, in the persons of two selfish men of genius, the open mind was contrasted with the close. By a marvellous combination of successive manœuvres, Julius Cæsar rose from ruin to empire; the spoiled child of society—sensitive to each breath of opinion—ever living at least among the externals of enjoyment—always retaining, by a genial kindness of manner, friends from each of the classes which he variously used. By what the vulgar might be pardoned for thinking a divine infatuation, Pompeius lost the best of political positions, threw away every recurring chance, and died a wandering exile. As a reserved, ungenial man, he never was able to estimate the feeling of the time. “I have only to stamp with my foot when the occasion requires, to raise legions from the soil of Italy!” were the words of one who could not in his utmost need raise a force to

strike one blow for Italy itself. The fate of Pompeius would have been that of Peel, if he too had played the game of selfish calculation. His changes, as it has been explained, are to be otherwise accounted for. He was always anxious to do right. An occupied man of business, he was converted when other men of business in the nation were converted.

It is not, however, to be denied that a calm and bland nature like that of Peel is peculiarly prone to self-illusion. Many fancy that it is passionate, imaginative men who most deceive themselves, and of course they are more tempted—a more vivid fancy and a more powerful impulse hurry them away. But they know their own weakness. "Do you believe in ghosts, Mr. Coleridge?" asked some lady. "No, ma'am, I have seen too many," was the answer. A quiet, calm nature, when it is tempted by its own wishes, is hardly conscious that it is tempted. These wishes are so gentle, quiet, as it would say, so "reasonable," that it does not conceive it possible to be hurried away into error by them. Nor is there any hurry. They operate quietly, gently, and constantly. Such a man will very much believe what he wishes. Many an imaginative outcast, whom no man would trust with sixpence, really forms his opinions on points which interest him by a much more intellectual process—at least, has more purely intellectual opinions beaten and tortured into him—than the eminent and respected man of business, in whom every one confides, who is considered a model of dry judgment, of clear and passionless equanimity. Doubtless Sir Robert Peel went on believing in the corn laws, when no one in the distrusted classes even fancied that they were credible.

It has been bitterly observed of Sir Robert Peel that he was "a Radical at heart", and, perhaps with a similar thought in his mind, Mr. Cobden said once, at a League meeting, "I do not altogether like to give up Peel. You see he is a Lancashire man." And it cannot be questioned that, strongly opposed as Sir Robert Peel

was to the Reform Bill, he was really much more suited to the reformed than to the unreformed House of Commons. The style of debating in the latter was described by one who had much opportunity for observation, Sir James Mackintosh, as "continuous, animated, after-dinner discussion" The House was composed mainly of men trained in two great schools, on a peculiar mode of education, with no great real knowledge of the classics, but with many lines of Virgil and Horace lingering in fading memories, contrasting oddly with the sums and business with which they were necessarily brought side by side These gentlemen wanted not to be instructed, but to be amused ; and hence arose what, from the circumstance of their calling, may be called the class of conversationalist statesmen. Mr. Canning was the type of these. He was a man of elegant gifts, of easy fluency, capable of embellishing anything, with a nice wit, gliding swiftly over the most delicate topics ; passing from topic to topic like the *raconteur* of the dinner-table, touching easily on them all, letting them all go as easily ; confusing you as to whether he knows nothing or knows everything. The peculiar irritation which Mr Canning excited through life was, at least in part, owing to the natural wrath with which you hear the changing talk of the practised talker running away about all the universe ; never saying anything which indicates real knowledge, never saying anything which at the very moment can be shown to be a blunder ; ever on the surface, and ever ingratiating itself with the superficial. When Mr Canning was alive, sound men of all political persuasions —the Duke of Wellington, Lord Grey—ever disliked him You may hear old Liberals to this day declaring he was the greatest charlatan who ever lived, angry to imagine that his very ghost exists , and when you read his speeches yourself, you are at once conscious of a certain dexterous insincerity which seems to lurk in the very felicities of expression, and to be made finer

with the very refinements of the phraseology. Like the professional converser, he seems so apt at the *finesse* of expression, so prone to modulate his words, that you cannot imagine him putting his fine mind to tough thinking, really working, actually grappling with the rough substance of a great subject. Of course, if this were the place for an estimate of Mr. Canning, there would be some limitation, and much excuse to be offered for all this. He was early thrown into what we may call an aristocratic debating society, accustomed to be charmed, delighting in classic gladiatorship. To expect a great speculator, or a principled statesman, from such a position, would be expecting German from a Parisian, or plainness from a diplomatist. He grew on the soil on which he had been cast; and it is hard, perhaps impossible, to separate the faults which are due to it and to him. He and it have both passed away. The old delicate parliament is gone, and the gladiatorship which it loved. The progress of things, and the Reform Bill which was the result of that progress, have taken, and are taking, the national representation away from the university classes, and conferring it on the practical classes. Exposition, arithmetic, detail, reforms—these are the staple of our modern eloquence. The old boroughs which introduced the young scholars are passed away; and even if the young scholars were in parliament, the subjects do not need the classic tact of expression. Very plain speaking suits the “passing tolls,” “registration of joint-stock companies,” finance, the post-office. The petty regulation of the details of civilization, which happily is the daily task of our Government, does not need, does not suit, a *recherché* taste or an ornate eloquence. As is the speech, so are the men. Sir Robert Peel was inferior to Canning in the old parliament, he would have been infinitely superior to him in the new. The aristocratic refinement, the nice embellishment of the old time, were as alien to him as the detail and dryness of the new era were suitable.

He was admirably fitted to be where the Reform Bill placed him. He was fitted to work and explain ; he was not able to charm or to amuse

In its exact form this kind of eloquence and statesmanship is peculiar to modern times, and even to this age. In ancient times the existence of slavery forbade the existence of a middle-class eloquence. The Cleon who possessed the tone and the confidence of the people in trade was a man vulgar, coarse, speaking the sentiments of a class whose views were narrow and whose words were mean. So many occupations were confined to slaves, that there was scarcely an opening for the sensible, moderate, rational body whom we now see. It was, of course, always possible to express the sentiments and prejudices of people in trade. It is new to this era, it seems created for Sir Robert Peel to express those sentiments, in a style refined, but not too refined ; which will not jar people of high cultivation, which will seem suitable to men of common cares and important transactions

In another respect Sir Robert Peel was a fortunate man. The principal measures required in his age were "repeals." From changing circumstances, the old legislation would no longer suit a changed community ; and there was a clamour, first for the repeal of one important Act, and then of another. This was suitable to the genius of Peel. He could hardly have created anything. His intellect, admirable in administrative routine, endlessly fertile in suggestions of detail, was not of the class which creates, or which readily even believes, an absolutely new idea. As has been so often said, he typified the practical intelligence of his time. He was prone, as has been explained, to receive the daily deposits of insensibly-changing opinion ; but he could bear nothing startling, nothing bold, original, single, is to be found in his acts or his words. Nothing could be so suitable to such a mind as a conviction that an existing law was wrong. The successive gradations of opinion pointed

to a clear and absolute result. When it was a question, as in the case of the Reform Bill, not of simple abolition, but of extensive and difficult reconstruction, he "could not see his way." He could be convinced that the anti-Catholic laws were wrong, that the currency laws were wrong, that the commercial laws were wrong ; especially he could be convinced that the *laissez-faire* system was right, and the real thing was to do nothing ; but he was incapable of the larger and higher political construction. A more imaginative genius is necessary to deal with the consequences of new creations, and the structure of an unseen future.

This remark requires one limitation. A great deal of what is called legislation is really administrative regulation. It does not settle what is to be done, but *how* it is to be done ; it does not prescribe what our institutions shall be, but directs in what manner existing institutions shall work and operate. Of this portion of legislation Sir Robert Peel was an admirable master. Few men have fitted administrative regulations with so nice an adjustment to a prescribed end. The Currency Act of 1844 was an instance of this. If you consult the speeches by which that bill was introduced and explained to parliament, you certainly will not find any very rigid demonstrations of political economy, or dry compactness of abstract principle. Whether the abstract theory of the supporters of that Act be sound or unsound, no exposition of it ever came from the lips of Peel. He assumed the results of that theory ; but no man saw more quickly the nature of the administrative machinery which was required. The separation of the departments of the Bank of England, the limitation of the country issues, though neither of them original ideas of Sir Robert's own mind, yet were not, like most of his other important political acts, forced on him from without. There was a general agreement among the received authorities in favour of a certain currency theory, the administrative statesman saw a good deal

before other men what was the most judicious and effectual way of setting it at work and regulating its action.

We have only spoken of Sir Robert Peel as a public man; and if you wish to write what is characteristic about him, that is the way to do so. He was a man whom it requires an effort to think of as engaged in anything but political business. Disraeli tells us that some one said that Peel was never happy except in the House of Commons, or doing something which had some relation to something to be done there. In common life, we continually see men scarcely separable as it were from their pursuits: they are as good as others, but their visible nature seems almost all absorbed in a certain visible calling. When we speak of them we are led to speak of it, when we would speak of it we are led insensibly to speak of them. It is so with Sir Robert Peel. So long as constitutional statesmanship is what it is now, so long as its function consists in recording the views of a confused nation, so long as success in it is confined to minds plastic, changeful, administrative—we must hope for no better man. You have excluded the profound thinker; you must be content with what you can obtain—the business gentleman.

## LORD BROUGHAM \*

(1857)

IT was a bold, perhaps a rash idea, to collect the writings of Henry Brougham. They were written at such distant dates ; their subjects are so various ; they are often so wedged into the circumstances of an age—that they scarcely look natural in a series of volumes. Some men, doubtless, by a strong grasp of intellect, have compacted together subjects as various ; the finger-marks of a few are on all human knowledge ; others, by a rare illuminative power, have lit up as many with a light that seems peculiar to themselves. *Franciscus Baconus sic cogitavit* may well illustrate an *opera omnia*. But Lord Brougham has neither power ; his restless genius has no claim to the still, illuminating imagination ; his many-handed, apprehensive intelligence is scarcely able to fuse and concentrate. Variety is his taste, and versatility his power. His career has not been quiet. For many years rushing among the details of an age, he has written as he ran. There are not many undertakings bolder than to collect the works of such a life and such a man.

The edition itself seems a good one. The volumes are convenient in size, well printed, and fairly arranged. The various writings it contains have been revised, but

\* *Works of Henry Lord Brougham, F R S, Member of the National Institute of France and the Royal Academy of Naples* London. Griffin

not over-revised, by their author. It is not, however, of the collection that we wish to speak. We would endeavour, so far as a few hasty pages may serve, to delineate the career and character of the writer. The attempt is among the most difficult. He is still among us; we have not the materials, possibly, nor the impartiality, of posterity. Nor have we the familiar knowledge of contemporaries; the time when Lord Brougham exerted his greatest faculties, is beyond the political memory of younger men. There are no sufficient books on the events of a quarter of a century ago; we have only traditions, and this must be our excuse if we fall, or seem to fall, into error and confusion.

The years immediately succeeding the great peace were years of sullenness and difficulty. The idea of the war had passed away; the thrill and excitement of the great struggle were no longer felt. We had maintained, with the greatest potentate of modern times, a successful contest for existence. We had our existence, but we had no more; our victory had been great, but it had no fruits. By the aid of pertinacity and capital, we had vanquished genius and valour; but no visible increase of European influence followed. Napoleon said that Wellington had made peace as if he had been defeated. We had delivered the continent; such was our natural idea; but the continent went its own way. There was nothing in its state to please the everyday Englishman. There were kings and emperors, "which was very well for foreigners, they had always been like that, but it was not many kings could pay ten per cent income tax." Absolutism, as such, cannot be popular in a free country. The Holy Alliance, which made a religion of despotism, was scarcely to be reconciled with the British constitution. Altogether we had vanquished Napoleon, but we had no pleasure in what came after him. The cause which agitated our hearts was gone; there was no longer a noise of victories in the air; continental affairs were dead, despotic, dull; we scarcely

liked to think that we had made them so ; with weary dissatisfaction we turned to our own condition.

This was profoundly unsatisfactory. Trade was depressed ; agriculture ruinous ; the working class singularly disaffected. During the war our manufacturing industry had grown most rapidly ; there was a not unnatural expectation that, after a general peace, the rate of increase would be accelerated. The whole continent, it was considered, would be opened to us ; Milan and Berlin decrees no longer excluded us ; Napoleon did not now interpose between "the nation of shopkeepers" and its customers ; now he was at St. Helena, surely those customers would buy ? It was half forgotten that they could not. The drain of capital for the war had been, at times, heavily felt in England ; there had been years of poverty and discredit ; still our industry had gone on, our workshops had not stopped. We had never known what it was to be the seat of war, as well as a power of war. We had never known our burdens enormously increased, just when our industry was utterly stopped ; disarranged as trading credit sometimes was, it had not been destroyed. No conscription had drained us of our most efficient consumers. The continent, south and north, had, though not everywhere alike, suffered all these evils ; its populations were poor, harassed, depressed. They could not buy our manufactures, for they had no money. The large preparations for a continental export lay on hand ; our traders were angry and displeased. Nor was content to be found in the agricultural districts. During the war the British farmer had inevitably a monopoly of this market ; at the approach of peace, his natural antipathy to foreign corn influenced the legislator. The Home Secretary of the time had taken into consideration whether 76s or 80s. was such a remunerating price as the agriculturist should obtain, and a corn law had passed accordingly. But no law could give the farmer famine prices, when there was scarcity here and

plenty abroad. There were riots at the passing of the "Bread-tax," as it was; in 1813, the price of corn was 120s., the rural mind was sullen in 1816, when it sunk to 57s. The protection given, though unpopular with the poor, did not satisfy the farmer.

The lower orders in the manufacturing districts were, of necessity, in great distress. The depression of trade produced its inevitable results of closed mills and scanty employment. Wages, when they could be obtained, were very low. The artisan population was then new to the vicissitudes of industry: how far they are, even now, instructed in the laws of trade, recent prosperity will hardly let us judge; but, at that time, they had no doubt that it was the fault of the State, and if not of particular statesmen, then of the essential institutions, that they were in want. They believed the Government ought to regulate their remuneration, and make it sufficient. During some straitened years of the war the name of "Luddites" became known. They had principally shown their discontent by breaking certain machines, which they fancied deprived them of work. After the peace, the records of the time are full of "Spencean Philanthropists," "Hampden Clubs," and similar associations, all desiring a great reform—some of mere politics, others of the law of property and all social economy. Large meetings were everywhere held, something like those of the year 1839: a general insurrection, doubtless a wild dream of a few hot-brained dreamers, was fancied to have been really planned. The name "Radical" came to be associated with this discontent. The spirit which, in after years, clamoured distinctly for the five points of the Charter, made itself heard in mutterings and threatenings.

Nor were the capitalists, who had created the new wealth, socially more at ease. Many of them, as large employers of labour, had a taste for Toryism, the rule of the people to them meant the rule of their work-people. Some of the wealthiest and most skilful became

associated with the aristocracy, but it was vain with the majority to attempt it. Between them and the possessors of hereditary wealth there was fixed a great gulf; the contrast of habits, speech, manners, was too wide. The two might coincide in particular opinions; they might agree to support the same institutions; they might set forth, in a Conservative creed, the same form of sound words: but, though the abstract conclusions were identical, the mode of holding them—to borrow a subtlety of Father Newman's—was exceedingly different. The refined, discriminating, timorous immobility of the aristocracy was distinct from the coarse, dogmatic, keep-downishness of the manufacturer. Yet more marked was the contrast, when the opposite tendencies of temperament had produced, as they soon could not but do, a diversity of opinion. The case was not quite new in England. Mr. Burke spoke of the tendency of the first East Indians to Jacobinism. They could not, he said, bear that their present importance should have no proportion to their recently acquired riches. No extravagant fortunes have, in this century, been made by Englishmen in India; but Lancashire has been a California. Families have been created there whose names we all know, which we think of when we mention wealth; some of which are now, by lapse of time, passing into the hereditary caste of recognized opulence. This, however, has been a work of time, and, before it occurred, there was no such intermediate class between the new wealth and the old. "It takes," it is said that Sir Robert Peel observed, "three generations to make a gentleman." In the meantime, there was an inevitable misunderstanding, the new cloth was too coarse for the old. Besides this, many actual institutions offended the eyes of the middle class. The state of the law was opposed both to their prejudices and interests that you could only recover your debts by spending more than the debt, was hard, and the injury was aggravated, the money was spent in "special

pleading"—“ in putting a plain thing so as to perplex and mislead a plain man.” “ Lord Eldon and the Court of Chancery,” as Sydney Smith expressed it, “ sat heavy on mankind.” The existence of slavery in our colonies, strongly supported by a strong aristocratic and parliamentary influence, offended the principles of middle-class Christianity, and the natural sentiments of simple men. The cruelty of the penal law—the punishing with death, sheep-stealing and shop-lifting—jarred the humanity of that second order of English society which, from their habits of reading and non-reading, may be called, *par excellence*, the scriptural classes. The routine harshness of a not very wise executive did not mitigate the feeling. The *modus operandi* of Government appeared coarse and oppressive.

We seemed to pay, too, a good deal for what we did not like. At the close of the war, the ten per cent income tax was of course heavily oppressive. The public expenditure was beyond argument lavish ; and it was spent in pensions, sinecures (for “ them idlers,” in the speech of Lancashire), and a mass of sundries, that an economical man of business will scarcely admit to be necessary, and that even now, after countless prunings, produce periodically “ financial reform associations,” “ administrative leagues,” and other combinations which amply testify the enmity of thrifty efficiency to large figures and muddling management. There had remained from the eighteenth century a tradition of corruption, an impression that direct pecuniary malversation pervaded the public offices ; an idea true in the days of Rigby or Bubb Dodington, but which, like many other impressions, continued to exist many years after the facts in which it originated had passed away. Government, in the hands of such a man as Lord Liverpool, was very different from government in the hands of Sir Robert Walpole. Respectability was exacted ; of actual money-taking there was hardly any. Still, especially among inferior officials, there was something

to shock modern purity. The size of jobs was large : if the Treasury of that time could be revived, it would be depressed at the littleness of whatever is perpetrated in modern administration. There were petty abuses, too, in the country—in municipalities—in charitable trusts—in all outlying public moneys, which seemed to the offended man of business, who saw them with his own eyes, evident instances confirming his notion of the malpractices of Downing Street “There are only five little boys in the school of Richester, they may cost £200, and the income is £2,000, and the trustees don’t account for the balance ; which is the way things are done in England : we keeps an aristocracy,” etc The whole of this feeling was concentrated into a detestation of rotten boroughs. The very name was enough : that Lord Dover, with two patent sinecures in the Exchequer and a good total for assisting in nothing at the Audit office, should return two members for one house, while Birmingham, where they made buttons, —“as good buttons as there are in the world, sir,”—returned no members at all, was an evident indication that reform was necessary. Mr. Canning was an eloquent man but “even *he* could not say that a decaying stump was the *people*” Gatton and Old Sarum became unpopular. The source of power seemed absurd, and the use of power was tainted Side by side with the incipient Chartism of the northern operative, there was growing daily more distinct and clear the Manchester philosophy, which has since expressed itself in the Anti-Corn Law League, and which, for good and evil, is now an element so potent in our national life Both creeds were forms of discontent And the counterpoise was wanting. The English constitution has provided that there shall always be one estate raised above the storms of passion and controversy, which all parties may respect and honour. The king is to be loved. But this theory requires, for a real efficiency, that the throne be filled by such a person as can be loved. In those times it was

otherwise. The nominal possessor of the crown was a very old man, whom an incurable malady had long sequestered from earthly things. The actual possessor of the royal authority was a voluptuary of overgrown person, now too old for healthy pleasure, and half sickened himself at the corrupt pursuits in which, nevertheless, he indulged perpetually. His domestic vices had become disgracefully public. Whatever might be the truth about Queen Caroline, no one could say she had been well treated. There was no royalty on which suffering workers, or an angry middle class, could repose; all through the realm there was a miscellaneous agitation, a vague and wandering discontent.

The official mind of the time was troubled. We have a record of its speculations in the life of Lord Sidmouth, who more than any one perhaps embodied it. He had been Speaker, and was much inclined to remedy the discontent of the middle classes by "naming them to the House." A more conscientious man perhaps has never filled a public position. If the forms of the House of Commons had been intuitively binding, no one could have obeyed them better. The "mace" was a "counsel of perfection" to him, all disorder hateful. In the Home Office it was the same. The Luddites were people who would not obey the Speaker. Constituted authority must be enforced. The claims of a suffering multitude were not so much neglected as unappreciated. A certain illiberality, as we should now speak, pervades the whole kind of thought. The most striking feature is an indisposition, which by long indulgence has become an inability, to comprehend another person's view, to put oneself in another's mental place, to think what he thinks, to conceive what he inevitably is. Lord Sidmouth referred to the file. He found that Mr. Pitt had put down disaffection by severe measures. Accordingly he suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, passed six Acts, commended a Peterloo massacre, not with conscious unfeelingness, but from

an absorbed officiality, from a knowledge that this was what "the department" had done before, and an inference that this must be done again. As for the reforming ideas of the middle classes, red tape had never tied up such notions; perhaps it was the French Revolution over again: you could not tolerate them

Between such a dominant mind as this, and such a subject mind as has been described, there was a daily friction. The situation afforded obvious advantages to enterprising men. Its peculiarity did not escape the shrewd eyes of John Lord Eldon. "If," said the Conservative Chancellor, "I were to begin life again, d—n my eyes, but I would begin as an agitator." Henry Brougham did so begin. During the war he had distinguished himself in the exposition of the grievances of the trading interest. Our Government had chosen a mode of carrying it on specially fitted to injure our commerce. "Napoleon had said that no vessel should touch a British port, and then enter a French one, or one under French control. The Orders in Council said that no vessel whatever should enter any such port without having first touched at some port of Great Britain."\* The natural results were the annihilation of our trade with the continent and a quarrel with the United States. The merchants of the country were alarmed at both consequences. Perhaps until then men hardly knew how powerful our trading classes had become. Meetings were held in populous places, petitions in great numbers—an impressive and important thing in those times—were presented. Wherever foreign commerce existed, the discontent expressed itself in murmurs. The forms of the House of Commons were far more favourable than they are now to action from without; and this is not unnatural, since there had been

\* This and the following quotations are from the *Speeches of Lord Brougham and the Introductions to them*, published in 1838. The latter were written by himself

as yet but few actions from without, and it had not been necessary to have a guard against them. "The petitions, as has been said, were numerous; and on the presentation of each there was a speech from the member presenting it, trying to bring on a debate, and suggesting topics which might irritate the ministry and convince the country." Mr. Brougham was always in his place. "Hardly an hour passed without detecting some false statement or illogical argument; hardly a night passed without gaining some convert to the cause of truth." The result was decisive. "Although opposed by the whole weight of the Government both in public and out of doors; although at first vigorously resisted by the energy, the acuteness, the activity, and the expertness which made Mr. Perceval one of the first debaters of his day, although, after his death, the struggle was maintained by the father of the system \* with all his fire and with his full knowledge of the subject—nay, although" the Ministry risked their existence on the question, the victory remained with the petitioners. The Orders in Council were abolished, and the efficacy of agitation proved "The Session of 1816 offered an example yet more remarkable of the same tactics being attended with signal success. On the termination of the war, the Government were determined, instead of repealing the whole income tax, which the law declared to be 'for and during the continuance of the war, and no longer,' to retain one-half of it" "As soon as his intention was announced, several meetings were held." Some petitions were presented. Mr. Brougham declared that, if the motion "were pressed on Thursday, he should avail himself of the forms of the House." Of course, the unpopularity of paying money was decisive; the income tax fell. The same faculty of aggression, which had been so successful, in these instances, was immediately so applied as to give voice

\* Mr. Stephen

to the sullenness of the country ; to express forms of discontent as real, though not with an object as determinate

Mr. Brougham did not underestimate his case. "There is one branch of the subject which I shall pass over altogether—I mean the amount of the distresses which are now universally admitted to prevail over almost every part of the empire Upon this topic all men are agreed ; the statements connected with it are as unquestionable as they are afflicting." Nor did he shrink from detail. "I shall suppose," he observed to the House, "a farm of 400 acres of fair, good land, yielding a rent of from £500 to £600 a year." "It will require a four years' course—200 acres being in corn, 100 in fallow, and 100 in hay and grass ;" and he seems to prove that at least it *ought* not to answer, "independently of the great rise in lime and all sorts of manure" The commercial mania of the time takes its turn in the description "After the cramped state in which the enemy's measures and our own retaliation [as we termed it] had kept our trade for some years, when the events of spring 1814 suddenly opened the continent, a rage for exporting goods of every kind burst forth, only to be explained by reflecting on the previous restrictions we had been labouring under, and only to be equalled [though not in extent] by some of the mercantile delusions connected with South American speculations. Everything that could be shipped was sent off ; all the capital that could be laid hold of was embarked. The frenzy, I can call it nothing less, after the experience of 1806 and 1810, descended to persons in the humblest circumstances and the farthest removed, by their pursuits, from commercial cares It may give the committee some idea of this disease, if I state what I know to have happened in one or two places. Not only clerks and labourers, but menial servants, engaged the little sums which they had been laying up for a provision against old age and sickness ; persons went

round tempting them to adventure in the trade to Holland, and Germany, and the Baltic ; they risked their mite in the hopes of boundless profits : it went with the millions of the more regular traders . the bubble soon burst, like its predecessors of the South Sea, the Mississippi, and Buenos Ayres : English goods were selling for much less in Holland and the north of Europe than in London and Manchester , in most places they were lying a dead weight without any sale at all ; and either no returns whatever were received, or pounds came back for thousands that had gone forth The great speculators broke ; the middling ones lingered out a precarious existence, deprived of all means of continuing their dealings either at home or abroad ; the poorer dupes of the delusion had lost their little hoards, and went upon the parish ; but the result of the whole has been much commercial distress—a caution now absolutely necessary in trying new adventures—a prodigious diminution in the demand for manufactures, and indirectly a serious defalcation in the effectual demand for the produce of land ”

Next year Mr Brougham described as the worst season ever known The year 1812, a year before esteemed one of much suffering, rose in comparison to one of actual prosperity He began with the “ clothing, a branch of trade which, from accidental circumstances, is not as depressed as our other great staples ” ; he passed to the iron trade, etc , etc He dilated on the distress, the discontent and suffering of the people Of course, the Government were to blame He moved that the “ unexampled ” difficulties of trade and manufactures were “ materially increased by the policy pursued with respect to our foreign commerce—that the continuance of these difficulties is in a great degree owing to the severe pressure of taxation under which the country labours and which ought by every practicable means to be lightened—that the system of foreign policy pursued by His Majesty’s ministers has

not been such as to obtain for the people of this country those commercial advantages which the influence of Great Britain in foreign countries fairly entitled them to expect" As became a pupil of the Edinburgh University, Mr. Brougham was not averse to political economy. He was ready to discuss the theory of rent or the corn laws He made a speech, which he relates as having had a greater success than any other which he made in Parliament, in support of Mr. Calcraft's amendment, to "substitute £192,638, 4s 9d for £385,276, 9s. 6d., the estimate for the household troops." Foreign policy was a favourite topic. Almost unsupported, as he said some years after, he attacked the Holy Alliance. Looking back through the softening atmosphere of reminiscence, he almost seems to have a kindness for Lord Castlereagh. He remembers with pleasure the utter "courage with which he exposed himself unabashed to the most critical audience in the world, while incapable of uttering anything but the meanest matter, expressed in the most wretched language", nor has he "forgotten the kind of pride that mantled on the fronts of the Tory phalanx when, after being overwhelmed with the fire of the Whig Opposition, or galled by the fierce denunciations of the Mountain, or harassed by the splendid displays of Mr. Canning, their chosen leader stood forth, and presenting the graces of his eminently patrician figure, flung open his coat, displayed an azure ribbon traversing a snow-white chest, and declared his high satisfaction that he could now meet the charges against him face to face, and repel with indignation all that his adversaries had been bold and rash enough to advance" But the "Mr Brougham" of that time showed no admiration; no denunciations were stronger than his; no sarcasm impinged more deeply; if the "noble lord in the blue ribbon" wished any one out of the House, the "man from the Northern Circuit" was probably that one. Kings and emperors met with little mercy, and later years have shown how

little was merited by the petty absolutism and unthinking narrowness of that time.

That Mr. Brougham indissolubly connected the education movement with his name everybody knows, but scarcely any one remembers how unpopular that movement was. Mr. Windham had said, some years before, "that the diffusion of knowledge was proper, might be supported by many good arguments ; but he confessed he was a sceptic on that point. It was said, Look at the state of the savages as compared with ours. A savage among savages was *very well*, and the difference was only perceived when he came to be introduced into civilized society" "His friend, Dr. Johnson, was of opinion that it was not right to teach reading beyond a certain extent in society." The same feeling continued Mr. Peel, in his blandest tones, attacked the education committee. Lord Stowell, not without sagacity, observed, "If you provide a larger amount of highly-cultivated talent than there is a demand for, the surplus is very likely to turn sour." Such were the sentiments of some of the best scholars of that era ; and so went all orthodox sentiment. That education was the same as republicanism, and republicanism as infidelity, half the curates believed. But, in spite of all this opposition, perhaps with more relish on account of it, Mr. Brougham was ever ready. He was a kind of prophet of knowledge. His voice was heard in the streets. He preached the gospel of the alphabet ; he sang the praises of the primer all the day long. "Practical observations," "discourses," "speeches," exist, terrible to all men now. To the kind of education then advocated there may be objections. We may object to the kind of "knowledge" then most sought after, but there can be no doubt that those who then laboured in its behalf must be praised for having inculcated, in the horrid heat of day, as a boring paradox what is now a boring commonplace.

Our space would fail us if we were to attempt to recount Brougham's labours on the slavery question,

on George IV. and Queen Caroline, or his hundred encounters with the routine statesmen. The series commenced at the Peace, but it continued for many years. Is not its history written in the chronicles of Parliament? You must turn the leaves—no unpleasant reading—of those old debates, and observe how often Mr. Brougham's name occurs, and on what cumbrous subjects, before you can estimate the frequency of his attacks and the harassing harshness of his labour. One especial subject was his more than any other man's—law reform. He had Romilly and Mackintosh as fellow-labourers in the amelioration of the penal code; he had their support, and that of some others, in his incessant narrations of the grievances of individuals, and denunciations of the unfeeling unthinkingness of our Home administration, but no man grappled so boldly—we had almost said so coarsely—with the crude complexities of our civil jurisprudence. for a rougher nature, a more varied knowledge of action than we can expect of philanthropists were needed for that task. The subject was most difficult to deal with. The English commerce and civilization had grown up in the meshes of a half-feudal code, further complicated with the curious narrowness and spirit of chicanery which haunt everywhere the law-courts of early times. The technicality which produced the evil made the remedy more difficult. There was no general public opinion on the manner of reform, the public felt the evil, but no one could judge of the efficacy of a remedy, save persons studious in complicated learning, who would hardly be expected to show how that learning could be rendered useless—hardly, indeed, to imagine a world in which it did not exist. The old creed, that these ingenious abuses were the last "perfection of reason," still lingered. It must give Lord Brougham some pride to reflect how many of the improvements which he was the first to popularize, if not to suggest, have been adopted—how many old abuses of detail which he first

indicated to Parliament, exist no longer—how many more are now admitted by everybody to be abuses, though the mode of abolition is contested. The speech on law reform, which he published in the collected edition of his speeches, is nearly a summary of all that has been done or suggested in common or civil law reform for the last thirty years. The effect which so bold an attack on so many things by a single person produced in that conservative time was prodigious.

"There never was such a nuisance as the man is," said an old lawyer whom we knew, and he expressed the feeling of his profession. If we add, that besides all these minor reforms and secondary agitations, Mr Brougham was a bold advocate of Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform—the largest heresies of that epoch—we may begin to understand the sarcasm of Mr Canning. "The honourable and learned gentleman having in the course of his parliamentary life supported or proposed *almost every species of innovation* which could be practised on the constitution, it was not very easy for ministers to do anything without seeming to borrow from him. Break away in what direction they would, whether to the right or to the left, it was all alike. 'Oh,' said the honourable gentleman, 'I was there before you—you would not have thought of that if I had not given you a hint.' In the reign of Queen Anne there was a sage and grave critic of the name of Dennis, who in his old age got it into his head that he had written all the good plays which were acted at that time. At last a tragedy came forth with a most imposing display of hail and thunder. At the first peal, Dennis exclaimed: 'That is my thunder!' So with the honourable and learned gentleman; there was no noise astir for the good of mankind in any part of the world, but he instantly claimed it for his thunder." We may have wearied our readers with these long references to old conflicts, but it was necessary. We are familiar with the aberrations of the ex-Chancellor, we forget

how bold, how efficacious, how varied was the activity of Henry Brougham

There are several qualities in his genius which make such a life peculiarly suited to him. The first of these is an aggressive, impulsive disposition. Most people may admit that the world goes ill, old abuses seem to exist, questionable details to abound. Hardly any one thinks that anything may not be made better. But how to improve the world, to repair the defects, is a difficulty. Immobility is a part of man. A sluggish conservatism is the basis of our English nature. "Learn, my son," said the satirist, "to bear tranquilly the calamities of others." We easily learn it. Most men have a line of life, and it imposes certain duties which they fulfil; but they cannot be induced to start out of that line. We dwell in "a firm basis of content." "Let the mad world go its own way, for it will go its own way." There is no doctrine of the English Church more agreeable to our instinctive taste than that which forbids all works of supererogation. "You did a thing without being obliged," said an eminent statesman. "then that must be wrong." We travel in the track. Lord Brougham is the opposite of this. It is not difficult to him to attack abuses. The more difficult thing for him would be to live in a world without abuses. An intense excitability is in his nature. He must "go off." He is eager to reform corruption, and rushes out to refute error. A tolerant placidity is altogether denied to him.

And not only is this excitability eager, it is many-sided. The men who have in general exerted themselves in labours for others, have generally been rather of a brooding nature; certain ideas, views, and feelings have impressed themselves on them in solitude; they come forth with them among the crowd, but they have no part in its diversified life. They are almost irritated by it. They have no conception except of their cause; they are abstracted in one thought, pained with the

dizziness of a heated idea. There is nothing of this in Brougham. He is excited by what he sees. The stimulus is from without. He saw the technicalities of the law-courts, observed a charitable trustee misusing the charity moneys; perceived that George IV. oppressed Queen Caroline; went to Old Sarum. He is not absorbed in a creed. He is pricked by facts. Accordingly, his activity is miscellaneous. The votary of a doctrine is concentrated, for the logical consequences of a doctrine are limited. But an open-minded man, who is aroused by what he sees, quick at discerning abuses, ready to reform anything which he thinks goes wrong—will never have done acting. The details of life are endless, and each of them may go wrong in a hundred ways.

Another faculty of Brougham (in metaphysics it is perhaps but a phase of the same) is the faculty of easy anger. The supine placidity of civilization is not favourable to animosity. A placid Conservative is perhaps a little pleased that the world is going a *little* ill. Lord Brougham does not feel this. Like an Englishman on the Continent, he is ready to blow up any one. He is a Jonah of detail, he is angry at the dust of life, and wroth at the misfeasances of *employés*. The most reverberating of bastinadoes is the official mind basted by Brougham. You did *this* wrong, why did you omit *that*? Document C ought to be on the third file; paper D is wrongly docketed in the ninth file. Red tape will scarcely succeed when it is questioned; you should take it as Don Quixote did his helmet, without examination, for a most excellent helmet. A vehement, industrious man proposing to untie papers and not proposing to spare errors is the terror of a respectable administrator. "Such an impracticable man, sir, interfering with the *office*, attacking private character, messing in what cannot concern him" These are the jibes which attend an irritable anxiety for the good of others. They have attended Lord Brougham through

life. He has enough of misanthropy to be a philanthropist.

How much of this is temper, and how much public spirit, it is not for any one to attempt to say. That a natural pleasure in wrath is part of his character, no one who has studied the career of Brougham can doubt. But no fair person can doubt either that he showed on many great occasions—and, what is more, on many petty occasions—a rare zeal for the public welfare. He may not be capable of the settled calm by which the world is best administered. There is a want of consistency in his goodness, of concentration in his action. The gusts of passion pass over him, and he is gone for a time you can scarcely say where. But, though he is the creature of impulse, his impulses are often generous and noble ones. No one would do what he has done, no one could have the intense motive power to do what he has done without a large share of diffused unselfishness. The irritation of the most acute excitability would not suffice. It is almost an axiom in estimates of human nature, that in its larger operations all that nature must concur. Doubtless there is a thread of calculation in the midst of his impulses; no man rises to be lord chancellor without, at least in lulls and intervals of impulse, a most discriminating and careful judgment of men and things and chances. But after every set-off and abatement, and without any softening of unamiable indications, there will yet remain—and a long series of years will continue to admire it—an eager principle of disinterested action.

Lord Brougham's intellectual powers were as fitted for the functions of a miscellaneous agitator as his moral character. The first of these, perhaps, is a singular faculty of conspicuous labour. In general, the work of agitation proceeds in this way: a conspicuous, fascinating popular orator is ever on the surface, ever ready with appropriate argument, making motions, attracting public attention, beneath and out of sight are innumer-

able workers and students, unfit for the public eye, getting up the facts, elaborating conclusions, supplying the conspicuous orator with the *data* on which he lives. There is a perpetual controversy, when the narrative of the agitation comes to be written, whether the merit of what is achieved belongs to the skilful advocate who makes a subtle use of what is provided for him, or the laborious inferiors and juniors who compose the brief and set in order the evidence. For all that comes before the public, Lord Brougham has a wonderful power. he can make motions, addresses, orations, when you wish and on what you wish. He is like a machine for moving amendments. He can keep at work any number of persons under him. Every agitation has a tendency to have an office ; some league, some society, some body of labourers must work regularly at its details. Mr Brougham was able to rush hither and thither through a hundred such kinds of men, and gather up the whole stock of the most recent information, the extreme decimals of the statistics, and diffuse them immediately with eager comment to a listening world. This may not be, indeed is not, the strictest and most straining kind of labour, the anxious, wearing, verifying, self-imposed scrutiny of scattered and complicated details is a far more exhausting task ; it is this which makes the eye dim and the face pale and the mind heavy. The excitement of a multifarious agitation will carry the energies through much, the last touches, and it is these which exhaust, need not be put on any one subject. Yet, after all deductions, such a career requires a quantity far surpassing all that most men have of life and *verve* and mind.

Another advantage of Lord Brougham is his extreme readiness, what he can do, he can do at a moment's notice. He has always had this power. Lord Holland, in his Memoirs referring to transactions which took place many years ago, gives an illustration of it. "The management of our press"—he is speaking of the ques-

tion of the general election of 1807—"fell into the hands of Mr. Brougham. With that active and able individual I had become acquainted through Mr. Allen in 1805. At the formation of Lord Grenville's ministry, he had written, at my suggestion, a pamphlet called *The State of the Nation*. He subsequently accompanied Lord Rosslyn to Lisbon. His early connection with the Abolitionists had familiarized him with the means of circulating political papers, and given him some weight with those best qualified to co-operate in such an undertaking. His extensive knowledge, his extraordinary readiness, his assiduity and habits of composition, enabled him to correct some articles, and to furnish a prodigious number himself. With partial and scanty assistance from Mr. Allen, myself, and one or two more, he in the course of a few days filled every bookseller's shop with pamphlets—most London newspapers, and all country ones without exception, with paragraphs—and supplied a large portion of the boroughs throughout the kingdom with handbills adapted to the local interests of the candidates, and all tending to enforce the conduct, elucidate the measures, or expose the adversaries of the Whigs."

Another power which was early remarked of Brougham, and which is as necessary as any to an important leader in great movements, is a skilful manipulation of men. Sir James Mackintosh noted in his Journal, on 30th January 1818:—"The address and insinuation of Brougham are so great, that nothing but the bad temper which he cannot always hide could hinder him from mastering everybody as he does Romilly. He *leads* others to his opinion, he generally appears at first to concur with theirs, and never more than half opposes it at once. This management is helped by an air of easy frankness that would lay suspicion itself asleep. He will place himself at the head of an opposition among whom he is unpopular; he will conquer the House of Commons, who hate, but now begin to fear him." An observer of

faces would fancy he noted in Lord Brougham this pliant astuteness marred by ill-temper. It has marked his career.

Another essential quality in multifarious agitation is an extreme versatility. No one can deny Lord Brougham this. An apparently close observer has described him. "Take the routine of a day, for instance. In his early life he has been known to attend, in his place in court, on circuit, at an early hour in the morning. After having successfully pleaded the cause of his client, he drives off to the hustings, and delivers, at different places, eloquent and spirited speeches to the electors. He then sits down in the retirement of his closet to pen an address to the Glasgow students, perhaps, or an elaborate article in the *Edinburgh Review*. The active labours of the day are closed with preparation for the court business of the following morning; and then, in place of retiring to rest, as ordinary men would after such exertions, he spends the night in abstruse study, or in social intercourse with some friend from whom he has been long separated. Yet he would be seen, as early as eight on the following morning, actively engaged in the court, in defence of some unfortunate object of Government persecution, astonishing the auditory, and his fellow-lawyers no less, with the freshness and power of his eloquence. A fair contrast with this history of a day, in early life, would be that of one at a more advanced period; say, in the year 1832. A watchful observer might see the new Lord Chancellor seated in the court over which he presided, from an early hour in the morning until the afternoon, listening to the arguments of counsel, and mastering the points of cases with a grasp of mind that enabled him to give those speedy and unembarrassed judgments that have so injured him with the profession. If he followed his course, he would see him, soon after the opening of the House of Lords, addressing their lordships on some intricate question of law, with an acuteness that drew down approbation even from his opponents; or, on

some all-engrossing political topic, casting firebrands into the camp of the enemy, and awakening them from the complacent repose of conviction to the hot contests with more active and inquiring intellects. Then, in an hour or so, he might follow him to the Mechanics' Institution, and hear an able and stimulating discourse on education, admirably adapted to the peculiar capacity of his auditors ; and towards ten, perhaps, at a Literary and Scientific Institution in Marylebone, the same Proteus-like intellect might be found expounding the intricacies of physical science with a never-tiring and elastic power. Yet, during all those multitudinous exertions, time would be found for the composition of a discourse on Natural Theology, that bears no marks of haste or excitement of mind, but presents as calm a face as though it had been the laborious production of a contemplative philosopher." We may differ in our estimate of the *quality* of these various efforts ; but no one can deny to him who was capable of them a great share in what Adam Smith mentioned as one of the most important facilities to the intellectual labourer —a quickness in " changing his hand."

Nor would any of these powers be sufficient, without that which is, in some sense, the principle of them all—an enterprising intellect. In the present day this is among the rarest of gifts. The speciality of pursuits is attended with a timidity of mind. Each subject is given up to men who cultivate it, and it only ; who are familiar with its niceties and absorbed in its details. There is no one who dares to look at the whole. "I have taken *all* knowledge to be my province," said Lord Bacon. The notion, and still more the expression of it, seems ridiculous now. The survey in each plot in the world of knowledge is becoming more complete. We shall have a plan of each soon, on a seven-inch scale, but we are losing the picturesque pictures of the outside and surface of knowledge in the survey of its whole. We have the petty survey, as we say, but no chart, no

globe of the entire world ; no bold sketch of its obvious phenomena, as they strike the wayfarer and impress themselves on the imagination The man of the speciality cannot describe the large outlines ; he is too close upon the minutiae , he does not know the relations of other knowledge, and no one else dares to infringe on his province—on the “ study of his life ”—for fear of committing errors in detail which he alone knows, and which he may expose Lord Brougham has nothing of this cowardice. He is ready to give, in their boldest and most general form, the rough outlines of knowledge as they strike the man of the world, occupied in its affairs and familiar with its wishes He is not cooped up in a single topic, and he has no dread of those who are He may fall into error, but he exhibits a subject as it is seen by those who know other subjects, by a man who knows the world , he at least attempts an embracing conception of his topic, he makes you feel its connection with reality and affairs He has exhibited this virtue at all stages of his career, but it was most valuable in his earlier time. There is no requisite so important as intellectual courage in one who seeks to improve all things in all ways.

His oratory also suits the character of the hundred-subject agitator well It is rough-and-ready It abounds in sarcasm, in vituperation, in aggression It does not shrink from detail. It would batter anything at any moment. We may think as we will on its merits as a work of art, but no one can deny its exact adaptation to a versatile and rushing agitator—to a Tribune of detail

The deficiencies of Brougham's character—in some cases they seem but the unfavourable aspects of its excellences—were also fitted for his earlier career. The first of these, to say it in a sentence, is the want of a thinking intellect A miscellaneous agitator must be ready to catch at anything, to attack everything, to blame any one This is not the life for a mind of anxious deliberation The patient philosopher, who is cautious

in his positions, dubious of his data, slow in his conclusions, must fail at once. He would be investigating while he should attack, inquiring while he should speak. He could not act upon a chance ; the moment of action would be gone. A sanguine and speedy intellect, ready to acquire, by its very idea all but excludes the examining, scrupulous, hesitating intellect which reflects.

Nor would a man of very sensitive judgment endure such a career. An agitator must err by excess ; a delicate nature errs by defects. There is a certain coarseness in the abusive breed. A Cleon should not feel failure. No man has ever praised very highly Lord Brougham's judgment ; but to have exceedingly improved it would perhaps have impaired his earlier utility. You might as fitly employ some delicate lady as a rough-rider, as a man of a poising, refining judgment in the task of a grievance-stater.

Harsh nerves, too, are no disadvantage. Perhaps they are essential. Very nice nerves would shrink from a scattered and jangled life. Three days out of six the sensitive frame would be jarred, the agitator would be useless. It is possible, indeed, to imagine that in a single noble cause—a cause that would light up the imagination, that would move the inner soul, a temperament the most delicate, a frame that is most poetic, might well be absorbingly interested. A little of such qualities may be essential. The apostle of a creed must have the nature to comprehend that creed, his fancy must take it in, his feelings realize it, his nature absorb it. To move the finer nature, you need the deeper nature. Perhaps even in a meaner cause, in a cause which should take a hold on the moving mob, sway the masses, rule the popular fancy, rough as the task of the mob-orator is, you require the delicate imagination. One finds some trace of it—still more of what is its natural accompaniment, a sweet nature—buried in the huge frame and coarse exterior of O'Connell. No unpoetic heart could touch the Irish people. Lord

Brougham is prose itself. He was described, many years ago, as excelling all men in a knowledge of the course of exchange. "He is," continued the satirist,\* "apprised of the exact state of our exports and imports, and scarce a ship clears out its cargo at Liverpool or Hull but he has the notice of the bill of lading." To explain the grievances of men of business needs no poetic nature. It scarcely needs the highest powers of invective. There is something nearly ridiculous in being the "Mirabeau of sums."

There is a last quality which is difficult to describe in the language of books, but which Lord Brougham excels in, and which has perhaps been of more value to him than all his other qualities put together. In the speech of ordinary men it is called "devil"; persons instructed in the German language call it "the demonic element." What it is one can hardly express in a single sentence. It is most easily explained by physiognomy. There is a glare in some men's eyes which seems to say, "Beware. I am dangerous, *noli me tangere*." Lord Brougham's face has this. A mischievous excitability is the most obvious expression of it. If he were a horse, nobody would buy him; with that eye, no one could answer for his temper. Such men are often not really resolute, but they are not pleasant to be near in a difficulty. They have an aggressive eagerness which is formidable. They would kick against the pricks sooner than not kick at all. A little of the demon is excellent for an agitator.

His peculiar adaptation to his peculiar career raised Mr. Brougham, in a few years, to a position such as few men have ever obtained in England—such as no other man perhaps has attained by popular agitation. When he became member for Yorkshire, in 1830, he was a power in the country. The cause which he was advocating had grown of itself. The power of the middle

classes, especially of the commercial classes, had increased. Lord Eldon was retiring. Lord Sidmouth had retired. What we now call "liberality" was coming into fashion. Men no longer regarded the half-feudal constitution as a "form of thought" Argument was at least thought fair. And this seems likely and natural. No one can wonder that the influence of men of business grew with the development of business, and they adopted the plain, straightforward, cautious creed, which we now know to be congenial to them. It is much more difficult to explain how reform became a passion. The state of the public mind during the crisis of the Reform Bill is one which those who cannot remember it cannot understand. The popular enthusiasm, the intense excitement, the rush of converts, the union of rectors and squires with those against whom they had respectively so long preached and sworn, the acclamation for the "whole bill and nothing but the bill," are become utterly strange. As the first French Assembly in a single night abolished, with public outcry, the essential abuses of the old *régime*, so our fathers at once, and with enthusiasm, abolished the close boroughs and the old representation, the lingering abuses of half-feudal England. The present Frenchmen are said not to comprehend August 4: we can hardly understand the year '32. An apathy has fallen upon us. But we can, nevertheless, and without theorizing, comprehend what an advantage such an enthusiasm was to the Liberals of that time. Most Whig ministries have been like Low-Church bishops. There is a feeling that the advocates of liberty ought scarcely to coerce; they have ruled, but they seem to deny the succession by which they ruled; they have been distrusted by a vague and half-conservative sentiment. In the tumult of 1832 all such feelings were carried away. Toryism was abolished with delight.

Mr. Brougham was among the first to share the

advantage. There is a legend that in the first Whig ministry Lord Brougham was offered the post of Attorney-General, and that he only replied by disdainfully tearing up the letter containing the offer. Whether the anecdote be literally true or not, we cannot say. The first of the modern Whig ministries is in the post-historical period. We have not yet enough of contemporary evidence to be sure of its details: years must pass before the memoir-writers can accumulate. But in spirit the tale is doubtless accurate. Lord Grey did not wish to make Mr Brougham Lord Chancellor, and Mr Brougham refused any inferior place as beneath his merits and his influence. The first Whig ministry was, indeed, in a position of some difficulty. The notion that a successful Opposition, as such, should take the reins of administration has been much derided. "Sir," said a sceptic on this part of constitutional government, "I would as soon choose for a new coachman the man who shied stones best at my old one!" And, without going the length of such critics, it must be allowed that the theory may produce odd results, when the persons summoned by their victory to assume office have been for many years in opposition. The party cannot have acquired official habits: the traditions of business cannot be known to them; their long course of opposition will have forced into leadership men hardly fitted for placid government. There is said to have been much of this feeling when Lord Grey's ministry was installed, it seemed as if that "old favourite of the public," Mr Buckstone, were called to license plays. Grave Englishmen doubted the gravity of the administration. To make Lord Brougham Chancellor was, therefore, particularly inconvenient. He was too mobile, you could not fancy him droning. He had attacked Lord Eldon during many years, of course; but did he know law? He was a most active person, would he sit *still* upon the woolsack? Of his inattention to his profession men circulated idle tales. "Pity he hadn't

known a little law, and then he would have known a little of everything," was the remark of one who certainly only knows one thing. A more circumstantial person recounted that, when Brougham had been a pupil of Sir Nicholas Tindal, in the Temple, an uncle of his, having high hopes of his ability, asked the latter : " I hope my nephew is giving himself up, soul and body, to his profession ? " " I do not know anything," replied the distinct special-pleader, " as to his *soul*, but his body is very seldom in my chambers." Putting aside with contempt this surface of tales, it could not be denied that Mr. Brougham's practice at the bar—large and lucrative as it was—immense as was the energy required to maintain it at the same time with his other labours—had yet not shown him to possess the finest discretion, the most delicate tact of the advocate Mr. Scarlett stole verdicts away from him " He strikes hard, sir," said an attorney ; " but he strikes wrong " His appointment as Chancellor scarcely strengthened the ministry of the time. Mr. Brougham was a hero ; Lord Brougham was " a necessity." It was like Mr. Disraeli being Chancellor of the Exchequer

After the lapse of years, and with the actual facts before us, it is not difficult to see how far these anticipations have been falsified, and how far they have been justified, by the result All the notions as to Lord Brougham's ignorance of law may at once be discarded. A man of his general culture and vigorous faculties, with a great memory and much experience in forensic business, is no more likely to be ignorant of the essential bookwork of law than a tailor to be ignorant of scissors and seams A man in business must be brought in contact with it ; a man of mind cannot help grasping it. No one now questions that Lord Brougham was and is a lawyer of adequate attainments But, at the same time, the judgments which supply the conclusive proof of this—the complete refutation of earlier cavillers—also would lead us to deny him the praise of an absolutely

judicious intellect. Great judges may be divided into two classes—judges for the parties, and judges for the lawyers. The first class of these are men who always decide the particular case before them rightly, who have a nice insight into all that concerns it, are acute discerners of fact, accurate weighers of testimony, just discriminators of argument. Lord Lyndhurst is perhaps as great a judge in this kind as it is easy to fancy. If a wise man had a good cause, he would prefer its being tried before Lyndhurst to its being tried before any one else. For the “parties,” if they were to be considered in litigation, no more would be needed. By law-students, however, and for the profession, something more is desired. They like to find, in a judicial decision, not only a correct adjustment of the particular dispute in court, but also an ample exposition of principles applicable to other disputes. The judge who is peculiarly exact in detecting the precise peculiarities of the case before him will be very apt to decide only what is essential to, absolutely needed by, that case. His delicate discrimination will see that nothing else is necessary; he will not bestow conclusions on after-generations; he will let posterity decide its own controversies. A judge of different kind has a professional interest in what comes before him: it is in his eyes not a pitiful dispute whether A or B is entitled to a miserable field, but a glorious opportunity of deciding some legal controversy on which he has brooded for years, and on which he has a ready-made conclusion. Accordingly, his judgments are in the nature of essays. They are, in one sense, applicable to the matter in hand—they decide it correctly, but they go so much into the antecedents of the controversy—give so much of principle—that the particular facts seem a little lost: the general doctrine fills the attention. No one can read a judgment of the late Lord Cottenham without feeling that it fixed the law on the matter in hand upon a defined basis for future years. Very likely he finds an authority

for the case which has occurred in his practice ; he does not stay to inquire whether the litigants appreciated the learning ; perhaps they did not—possibly they would have preferred that a more exclusive prominence should be given to themselves. Now Lord Brougham has neither of these qualities ; his intellect wants the piercing precision which distinguishes the judge—the unerring judge—of the case then present ; and though competently learned, he has never been absorbed in his profession, as a judge of “ principle ” almost always must be. A man cannot provide a dogma suiting all the cases of the past, and deciding all the cases for the future, without years of patient reflection. His mind must be stored with doctrines. No one can fancy this of Lord Brougham. He is not to be thought of as giving still attention to technical tenets, years of brooding consideration to an abstract jurisprudence. Accordingly, though an adequate, and in his time—for his speed cleared off arrears—a most useful judge, he cannot be said to attain the first rank in the judicial scale ; and such we believe is the estimation of the world.

Of the political duties of the Chancellor, and Lord Brougham’s performance of them, it is not easy to speak. Many of them are necessarily secret, and the history of those times cannot yet be written. That he showed wonderful energy, zeal, and power, no one can doubt ; nor that the essential defects of his character soon showed him but little qualified for an administrator. In the year 1802, Francis Horner anticipated that if “ an active career were opened to Brougham, he would show a want of prudence and moderation ” ; and it is curious to read, as a commentary on it, what the Duke of Wellington wrote to Sir R. Peel, on the 15th November 1835. “ His Majesty mentioned that Lord Brougham \* had threatened he would not put the great

\* The editors of Sir R. Peel’s *Memours* have left this name in blank, but if they had wished it not to be known, they should have suppressed the passage. Everybody knows who held the great seal at that time.

seal to a commission to prorogue the parliament ; " and afterwards correcting himself . " It appears that Lord Brougham did not make the threat that he would not prorogue the parliament, but that Lord Melbourne said he was in such a state of excitement that he might take that course." We must wait for Lord Brougham's memoirs before we know the exact history of that time ; but all the glimpses we get of it show the same picture of wildness and eccentricity.

The times—the most nearly revolutionary times which England has long seen—were indeed likely to try an excitable temperament to the utmost ; but at the same time they afforded scope to a brilliant manager of men, which only such critical momentary conjunctures can do. Mr. Roebuck gives a curious instance of this :

" The necessity of a dissolution had long been foreseen and decided on by the ministers ; but the king had not yet been persuaded to consent to so bold a measure ; and now the two chiefs of the administration were about to intrude themselves into the royal closet, not only to advise and ask for a dissolution, but to request the king on the sudden—on this very day, and within a few hours—to go down and put an end to his parliament in the midst of the session, and with all the ordinary business of the session yet unfinished. The bolder mind of the Chancellor took the lead, and Lord Grey anxiously solicited him to *manage* the king on the occasion. So soon as they were admitted, the Chancellor, with some care and circumlocution, propounded to the king the object of the interview they had sought. The startled monarch no sooner understood the drift of the Chancellor's somewhat periphrastic statement, than he exclaimed in wonder and amazement against the very idea of such a proceeding ' How is it possible, my lords, that I can after this fashion repay the kindness of parliament to the queen and myself ? They have just granted me a most liberal civil list, and to the queen a splendid annuity in case she survives me ' The Chancellor confessed that they had, as regarded his Majesty, been a liberal and wise parliament, but said that nevertheless their further existence was incompatible with the peace and

safety of the kingdom. Both he and Lord Grey then strenuously insisted upon the absolute necessity of their request, and gave his Majesty to understand that this advice was by his ministers unanimously resolved on, and that they felt themselves unable to conduct the affairs of the country in the present condition of the parliament. This last statement made the king feel that a general resignation would be the consequence of a further refusal. Of this, in spite of his secret wishes, he was at the moment really afraid, and therefore he, by employing petty excuses, and suggesting small and temporary difficulties, soon began to show that he was about to yield. 'But, my lords, nothing is prepared, the great officers of state are not summoned.' 'Pardon me, sir,' said the Chancellor, bowing with profound apparent humility, 'we have taken the great liberty of giving them to understand that your Majesty commanded their attendance at the proper hour.' 'But, my lords, the crown and the robes, and other things needed, are not prepared.' 'Again I most humbly entreat your Majesty's pardon for my boldness,' said the Chancellor, 'they are all prepared and ready—the proper officers being desired to attend in proper form and time.' 'But, my lords,' said the king, reiterating the form in which he put his objection, 'you know the thing is wholly impossible; the guards, the troops, have had no orders, and cannot be ready in time.' This objection was in reality the most formidable one. The orders to the troops on such occasions emanate always directly from the king, and no person but the king can in truth command them for such service, and as the Prime Minister and daring Chancellor well knew the nature of royal susceptibility on such matters, they were in no slight degree doubtful and anxious as to the result. The Chancellor therefore, with some real hesitation, began again as before, 'Pardon me, sir, we know how bold the step is that, presuming on your great goodness, and your anxious desire for the safety of your kingdom, and happiness of your people, we have presumed to take I have given orders, and the troops are ready.' The king started in serious anger, flamed red in the face, and burst forth with, 'What, my lords, have you dared to act thus? Such a thing was never heard of. You, my Lord Chancellor, ought to know that such an act is treason, high treason, my lord.' 'Yes, sir,' said the Chancellor, 'I

do know it, and nothing but my thorough knowledge of your Majesty's goodness, of your paternal anxiety for the good of your people, and my own solemn belief that the safety of the state depends upon this day's proceedings, could have emboldened me to the performance of so unusual and, in ordinary circumstances, so improper a proceeding. In all humility I submit myself to your Majesty, and am ready in my own person to bear all the blame, and receive all the punishment which your Majesty may deem needful; but I again entreat your Majesty to listen to us and to follow our counsel, and as you value the security of your crown and the peace of your realms, to yield to our most earnest solicitations.' After some further expostulations by both his ministers, the king cooled down and consented. Having consented, he became anxious that everything should be done in the proper manner, and gave minute directions respecting the ceremonial. The speech to be spoken by him at the prorogation was ready prepared and in the Chancellor's pocket. To this he agreed, desired that everybody might punctually attend, and dismissed his ministers for the moment with something between a menace and a joke upon the audacity of their proceeding."

With the fall of Lord Melbourne's first administration terminated Lord Brougham's administrative career. As every one knows, on the defeat of Sir Robert Peel and the subsequent return of the Whigs to power, he was not invited to resume office. Since that time—for now more than twenty years—he has had to lead the life in general the most trying to political reputation, perhaps to real character, and more than any other alien to the character of his mind and the tendencies of his nature. We have had many recent instances how difficult it is to give what is variously termed an "independent support," and a "friendly opposition," to a Government of which you approve the general tendencies, but are inclined to criticize the particular measures. The Peelites and Lord John Russell have for several years been in general in this position, and generally with a want of popular sympathy. As they agree with the Government in principle, they cannot take, by way of

objection, what the country considers broad points ; their suggestions of detail seem petty and trivial to others—the public hardly think of such things ; but men who have long considered a subject, who have definite ideas and organized plans, can scarcely help feeling an eager interest in the smallest minutiae of the mode of dealing with it. Sometimes they discern a real importance undiscerned by those less attentive ; more commonly, perhaps, they fancy there is something peculiarly felicitous in contrivances settled by themselves and congenial to their habits or their notions. Lord Brougham was in a position to feel this peculiarly. The various ideas which he had struggled for in earlier life were successful one by one ; the hundred reforms he suggested were carried, the hundred abuses he had denounced were abolished. The world which *was*, was changed to the world which *is* ; but it was not changed by him. That he should have been favourably disposed to the existing liberal administrations was not likely ; the separation was too recent, perhaps too abrupt. An eager and excitable disposition is little likely to excel in the measured sentences, the chosen moments, the polished calm of the *frondeur*. Accordingly, the life of Brougham for many years has not been favourable to his fame. On particular occasions, as on the abolition of Negro apprenticeship, he might attain something of his former power. But, in general, his position has been that of the agitator whose measure is being substantially carried, yet with differences of detail aggravating to his temper and annoying to his imagination. Mr. Cobden described Sir Robert Peel's mode of repealing the corn laws with the microscopic sliding-scale for three years, as seventeen-and-sixpence on the demand of the Anti-corn-law League, and good security for the other half-crown. Yet excitable men at that very moment clamoured for the last half-crown, they could not bear the modification, the minute difference from that on which they had set their hearts. We must remember

this in relation to what is now most familiar to us in the life of Lord Brougham. To a man so active, to be put out of action is a pain which few can appreciate; that other men should enter into your labours is not pleasant; that they should be Canningites does not make it any better. We have witnessed many escapades of Lord Brougham; we perhaps hardly know his temptations and his vexations.

Such is the bare outline of the career of Lord Brougham. A life of early, broken, various agitation, a short interval of ordinary administration—occurring, however, at a time singularly extraordinary, a long old age secluded from the actual conduct of affairs, and driven to distinguish itself by miscellaneous objection and diversified sarcasm. Singular stories of eccentricity and excitement, even of something more than either of these, darken these later years. On these we must not dwell. There are many aspects of Brougham's varied character, a few of which we should notice by themselves.

The most connected with his political life is his career as a law reformer. We have spoken of his early labours on this subject; we have said that few men who have devoted themselves to nothing else have exposed so many abuses, propounded so many remedies; that one of his early motions is a schedule of half, and much more than half, that has been, or will be, done upon a large portion of the subject. But here praise must end. The completed, elaborated reforms by which Lord Brougham will be known to posterity are few, are nothing in comparison with his power, his industry, and his opportunities. There is nothing, perhaps, for which he is so ill qualified. The bold vehement man who exposes an abuse has rarely the skilful, painful, dissecting power which expunges it. Lord Brougham once made a speech on conveyancing. "I should not," said, on the next day, an eminent professor of that art, "like him to draw a deed relating to my property." A law reformer,

in order that his work may be perfect, requires the conveyancing abilities. He must be able to bear in mind the whole topic—to draw out what is necessary of it on paper—to see what is necessary—to discriminate the rights of individuals—to distinguish, with even metaphysical nicety, the advantage he would keep from the abuse he would destroy. He must elaborate enacting clauses which will work in the complicated future, repealing clauses which will not interfere with the complicated machinery of the past. His mind must be the mind of a codifier. A rushing man, like Lord Brougham, cannot hope to have this. A still and patient man, in quiet chambers, apt in niceties, anxious by temperament, precise in habit, putting the last extreme of perfection on whatever he may attempt, is the man for the employment. You must not expect this quiet precision from an agitator. There is the same difference as that between the hard-striking pugilist and the delicate amputating operator.

The same want of repose has repaired his excellence in a pursuit to which, at first sight, it seems much less needful—the art of oratory. We are apt to forget that oratory is an imaginative art. From our habits of business, the name of rhetoric has fallen into disrepute: our greatest artists strive anxiously to conceal their perfection in it; they wish their address in statement to be such, that the effect seems to be produced by that which is stated, and not by the manner in which it is stated. But not the less on that account is there a real exercise of the imagination in conceiving of the events of a long history, in putting them forward in skilful narration, each fact seeming by nature to fall into its place, all the details appearing exactly where they should—a group, to borrow a metaphor from another art, collecting itself from straggling and desultory materials. Still more evidently is the imagination requisite in expressing deep emotions, even common emotions, or in describing noble objects. Now, it seems

to be a law of the imagination that it only works in a mind of stillness. The noise and crush of life jar it. "No man," it has been said, "can say, *I will* compose poetry": he must wait until—from a brooding, half-desultory inaction—poetry may arise, like a gentle mist, delicately and of itself

"I waited for the train at Coventry;  
I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge  
To watch the three tall spires, and there I shaped  
The city's legend into this" \*

Lord Brougham would not have waited so. He would have rushed up into the town; he would have suggested an improvement, talked the science of the bridge, explained its history to the natives. The quiet race would think twenty people had been there. And, of course, in some ways this is admirable, such life and force are rare; even the "grooms and porters" would not be insensible to such an aggressive intelligence—so much *knocking* mind. But, in the meantime, no lightly-touched picture of old story would have arisen in his imagination. The city's legend would have been thrust out the "fairy frostwork" of the fancy would have been struck away: there would have been talk on the schooling of the porter's eldest boy. The rarity of great political oratory arises in a great measure from this circumstance. Only those engaged in the jar of life have the material for it, only those withdrawn into a brooding imagination have the faculty for it. M. de Lamartine has drawn a striking picture of one who had the opportunity of action and the dangerous faculty of leisure. "Vergniaud s'enivrait dans cette vie d'artiste, de musique, de déclamation et de plaisirs, il se pressait de jouir de sa jeunesse, comme s'il eût le pressentiment qu'elle serait sitôt cueillie. Ses habitudes étaient méditatives et paresseuses. Il se levait au milieu du jour;

\* Tennyson "Godiva"

il écrivait peu et sur des feuilles éparses, il appuyait le papier sur ses genoux comme un homme pressé qui se dispute le temps ; il composait ses discours lentement dans ses rêveries et les retenait à l'aide de notes dans sa mémoire ; il polissait son éloquence à loisir, comme le soldat poli son arme au repos" \* This is not the picture of one who is to attain eminence in stirring and combative time. Harsher men prevailed, a mournful fate swallowed up Vergniaud's delicate fancies. He died, because he was idle ; but he was great, because he was idle. Idleness with such minds is only the name for the passive enjoyment of a justly-moving imagination.

We should only weary our readers with a repetition of what has been said a hundred times already if we tried to explain that Lord Brougham has nothing of this. His merit is, that he was never idle in his life. He must not complain if he has the disadvantage of it also. That he was a most effective speaker in his great time is of course undoubted. His power of sarcasm, his amazing readiness, his energetic vigour of language, made him, if not a very persuasive, at least a most formidable orator. His endless animation must tell even to excess upon his audience. But he has not acted wisely for his fame in publishing his speeches. They have the most unpardonable of all faults—the fault of dullness. It is scarcely possible to read them. Doubtless, at the time their influence was considerable, they may even have been pleasant, as you like to watch the play of a vicious horse ; but now, removed from the hearing of the speaker's voice—out of the way of the motions of his face and the glare of his eye—even their evil-speaking loses its attractiveness. The sarcasm seems blunt—the denunciation heavy. They are crowded with a detail which may have been, though acute observers say it was not, attractive at the time, but which no one

\* *Histoire des Girondins*, book xviii, chap ix, p 88

can endure now. Not only do you feel that you are bored, but you are not sure that you are instructed. An agitator's detail is scarcely to be trusted. His facts may be right, but you must turn historian in order to test them, you must lead a life of State papers and old letters to know if they are true. It is perhaps possible for the imagination of man to give an interest to any considerable action of human life. A firmly-drawing hand may conduct us through the narration—an enhancing touch enliven the details; but to achieve this with contested facts in a combative life is among the rarest operations of a rare power. The imagination has few tasks so difficult. To Lord Brougham, least of all, has it been possible to attract men by the business detail and cumbrous aggressions of the last age. His tone is too harsh. He has shattered his contemporaries, but he will not charm posterity.

Lord Brougham has wished to be known, not only as an orator, but as a writer on oratory. He has written a *Discourse on Ancient Oratory*, recommending, and very deservedly, its study to those who would now excel in the art, and there is no denying that he has rivalled the great Greek orator, at least in one of his characteristic excellences. There is no more manly book in the world than Brougham's *Speeches*, he always "calls a spade a spade"; the rough energy strikes, we have none of the tawdry metaphor or half-real finery of the inferior orators, there is not a simile which a man of sense should not own. Nevertheless, we are inclined to question whether his studies on ancient oratory, especially on the great public oration of Demosthenes, have been entirely beneficial to him. These masterly productions were, as every one knows, the eager expression of an intense mind on questions of the best interest; they have accordingly the character of vehemence. Speaking on subjects which he thought involved the very existence of his country, he could not be expected to speak very temperately, he did not, and could not, admit that

there was fair ground for difference of opinion ; that an equally patriotic person, after proper consideration, could by possibility arrive at an opposite conclusion. The circumstances of the parliamentary orator in this country are quite different. A man cannot discuss the dowry of the Princess Royal, the conditions of the Bank Charter, as if they were questions of existence—all questions arising now present masses of fact, antecedents in blue-books, tabulated statistics, on which it is impossible that there should not be a necessity for an elaborate inquiry—that there should not be discrepancy of judgment after that inquiry. The Demosthenic vehemence is out of place. The calm, didactic exposition, almost approaching to that of the lecturer, is more efficacious than the intense appeal of an eager orator. That “Counsellor Broom was all in a fume,” is a line in one of the best ludicrous poems of a time rather fertile in such things. On points of detail it is ridiculous to be in a passion ; on matters of business it is unpersuasive to be enthusiastic, even on topics less technical the Greek oratory is scarcely a model to be imitated precisely. A certain *nonchalant* ease pervades our modern world—we affect an indifference we scarcely feel ; our talk is light, almost to affectation ; our best writing is the same ; we suggest rather than elaborate, hint rather than declaim. The spirit of the ancient world was very different—the tendency of its conversation probably was to a rhetorical formality, a haranguing energy ; certainly it is the tendency of its written style. “With every allowance,” says Colonel Mure, “for the peculiar genius of the age in which the masterpieces of Attic prose were produced—a consideration which must always have a certain weight in literary judgments—still, the impartial modern critic cannot but discern in this pervading rhetorical tone a defect, perhaps the only serious defect, in the classical Greek style. . . . It certainly is not natural for the historian or the popular essayist to address his readers in the same tone in which

the defender of a client or the denouncer of a political opponent addresses a public assembly" \* So great a change in the general world, in the audience to be spoken to, requires a change in the speaker. The light touch of Lord Palmerston is more effective than the most elaborated sentences of a formal rhetorician. Of old, when conversation and writing were half oratorical, oratory might be very oratorical; now that conversation is very conversational, oratory must be a little conversational. In real life, Lord Brougham has too much of the orator's tact not to be half aware of this, but his teaching forgets it.

That Lord Brougham should have adopted a theory enjoining vehemence in oratory is an instance to be cited by those who hold that a man's creed is a justification for his inclinations. He is by nature over-vehement; and what is worse, it is not vehemence of the best kind; there is something of a scream about it. People rather laughed at his kneeling to beseech the peers. No one is sure that there is real feeling in what he reads and hears; it seems like a machine going. Lord Cockburn has an odd anecdote. An old judge, who loved dawdling, disliked the "discomposing qualities" of Brougham. His revenge consisted in sneering at Brougham's eloquence by calling it or him *the Harangue*. "Well, gentlemen, what did *the Harangue* say next? Why it said this (mis-stating it), but, here, gentlemen, *the Harangue* was wrong and not intelligible." We have some feeling for the old judge. If you take a speech of Brougham, and read it apart from his voice, you have half a notion that it is a gong going, eloquence by machinery, an incessant talking *thing*.

It is needless to point out how completely an excitable ungenial nature, such as we have so much spoken of, incapacitates Lord Brougham for abstract philosophy. His works on that subject are sufficiently numerous,

\* *History of the Language and Literature of Ancient Greece*, vol. iv, p. 17.

but we are not aware that even his most ardent admirers have considered them as works of really the first class. It would not be difficult to extract from the *Political Philosophy*, which is probably the best of them, singular instances of inconsistency and of confusion. The error was in his writing them; he who runs may *read*, but it does not seem likely he will think. The brooding disposition, and the still, investigating intellect, are necessary for consecutive reasonings on delicate philosophy.

The same qualities, however, fit a man for the acquisition of general information. A man who is always rushing into the street will become familiar with the street. One who is for ever changing from subject to subject will not become *painfully* acquainted with any one, but he will know the outsides of them all, and the road from each to the other. Accordingly, all the descriptions of Lord Brougham, even in his earliest career, speak of his immense information. Mr Wilberforce, in perhaps the earliest printed notice of him, recommended Mr Pitt to employ him in a diplomatic capacity, on account of his familiarity with languages, and the other kinds of necessary knowledge. He began by writing on *Porisms*, only the other day he read a paper on some absurdities imputed to the *Integral Calculus*, in French, at Paris. It would be in the highest degree tedious to enumerate all the subjects he knows something of. Of course, an extreme correctness cannot be expected. "The most *misinformed* man in Europe," is a phrase of satire, yet, even in its satire, it conveys a compliment to Brougham's information.

An especial interest in physical science may be remarked in Brougham, as in most men of impressive minds in his generation. He came into life when the great discoveries in our knowledge of the material world were either just made, or were on the eve of being made. The enormous advances which have been actually made in material civilization were half anticipated. There was a vague hope in science. The boundaries of the

universe, it was hoped, would move Active, ardent minds were drawn with extreme hope to the study of new moving power ; a smattering of science was immeasurably less common then than now, but it exercised a stronger dominion, and influenced a higher class of genius It was new, and men were sanguine. In the present day younger men are perhaps repelled into the opposite extreme We live among the marvels of science, but we know how little they change us. The essentials of life are what they were. We go by the train, but we are not improved at our journey's end. We have railways, and canals, and manufactures—excellent things, no doubt, but they do not touch the soul. Somehow, they seem to make life more superficial. With a half-wayward dislike, some in the present generation have turned from physical science and material things “ We have tried these, and they fail,” is the feeling. “ What is the heart of man the better for galvanic engines and hydraulic presses ? Leave us to the old poetry and the old philosophy ; there is at least a life and a mind ” It is the day after the feast. We do not care for its delicacies ; we are rather angry at its profusion , we are cross to hear it praised Men who came into active life half a century ago were the guests invited to the banquet , they did not know what was coming, but they heard it was something gorgeous and great , they expected it with hope and longing. The influence of this feeling was curiously seen in the Useful Knowledge Society, the first great product of the educational movement in which Lord Brougham was the most ardent leader. No one can deny that their labours were important, their intentions excellent, the collision of mind which they created most beneficial. Still, looking to their well-known publications, beyond question the knowledge they particularly wished to diffuse is, according to the German phrase, *factish* Hazlitt said “ they confounded a knowledge of useful things with useful knowledge ” An idea, half unconscious,

pervades them, that a knowledge of the detail of material knowledge, even too of the dates and shell of outside history, is extremely important to the mass of men ; that all will be well when we have a cosmical ploughboy and a mob that knows hydrostatics. We shall never have it ; but even if we could, we should not be much the better. The heart and passions of men are moved by things more within their attainment ; the essential nature is stirred by the essential life ; by the real actual existence of love, and hope, and character, and by the real literature which takes in its spirit, and which is in some sort its undefecated essence. Thirty years ago the preachers of this now familiar doctrine were unknown, nor was their gospel for a moment the one perhaps most in season. It was good that there should be a more diffused knowledge of the material world ; and it was good, therefore, that there should be partisans of matter, believers in particles, zealots for tissue, who were ready to incur any odium and any labour that a few more men might learn a few more things. How a man of incessant activity should pass easily to such a creed is evident. He would see the obvious ignorance. The less obvious argument, which shows that this ignorance, in great measure inevitable, was of far less importance than would be thought at first sight, would never be found by one who moved so rapidly.

We have gone through now, in some hasty way, most of the lights in which Lord Brougham has been regarded by his contemporaries. There is still another character in which posterity will especially think of him. He is a great memoirist. His *Statesmen of George III.* contains the best sketches of the political men of his generation, one with another, which the world has, or is likely to have. His is a fine painter of the exterior of human nature. Some portion of its essence requires a deeper character ; another portion, more delicate sensations, but of the rough appearance of men, as they struck him

in the law-court and in Parliament—of the great debater struggling with his words—the stealthy advocate gliding into the confidence of the audience—the great judge unravelling all controversies, and deciding by a well-weighed word all complicated doubts—of such men as these, and of men engaged in such tasks as these, there is no greater painter perhaps than Brougham. His eager, aggressive disposition brought him into collision with conspicuous men ; his skill in the obvious parts of human nature has made him understand them. A man who has knocked his head against a wall—if such an illustration is to be hazarded—will learn the nature of the wall. Those who have passed fifty years in managing men of the world will know their external nature, and, if they have literary power enough, will describe it. In general, Lord Brougham's excellence as a describer of character is confined to men whom he had thus personally and keenly encountered. The sketches of the philosophers of the eighteenth century, of French statesmen, are poor and meagre. He requires evidently the rough necessities of action to make him observe. There is, however, a remarkable exception. He preserves a singularly vivid recollection of the instructors of his youth, he nowhere appears so amiable as in describing them. He is over-partial, no doubt ; but an old man may be permitted to reverence, if he can reverence, his schoolmaster.

This is all that our limits will permit us to say of Lord Brougham. On so varied a life, at least on a life with such varied pursuits, one might write to any extent. The regular biographer will come in after years. It is enough for a mere essayist to sketch, or strive to sketch, in some rude outline, the nature of the man.

## WILLIAM PITT \*

(1861)

LORD STANHOPE'S Life of Mr. Pitt has both the excellences and the defects which we should expect from him, and neither of them are what we expect in a great historical writer of the present age. Even simple readers are becoming aware that historical investigation, which used to be a sombre and respectable calling, is now an audacious pursuit. Paradoxes are very bold and very numerous. Many of the recognized "good people" in history have become bad, and all the very bad people have become rather good. We have palliations of Tiberius, eulogies on Henry VIII, devotional exercises to Cromwell, and fulsome adulation of Julius Cæsar and of the first Napoleon. The philosophy of history is more alarming still. One school sees in it but a gradual development of atheistic belief, another threatens to resolve it all into "the three simple agencies, starch, fibrin, and albumen." But in these exploits of audacious ingenuity and specious learning Lord Stanhope has taken no part. He is not anxious to be original. He travels, if possible, in the worn track of previous historians, he tells a plain tale in an easy, plain way; he shrinks from wonderful novelties; with the cautious scepticism of true common sense, he is always glad to find that the conclusions at which he

\* *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt* By Earl Stanhope, author of the *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht*

arrives coincide with those of former inquirers. His style is characteristic of his matter. He narrates with a gentle sense and languid accuracy, very different from the stimulating rhetoric and exciting brilliancy of his more renowned contemporaries

In the present case Lord Stanhope has been very fortunate both in his subject and his materials. Mr. Pitt has never had even a decent biographer, though the peculiarities of his career are singularly inviting to literary ambition. His life had much of the solid usefulness of modern times, and not a little also of the romance of old times. He was skilled in economical reform, but retained some of the majesty of old-world eloquence. He was as keen in small figures as a rising politician now ; yet he was a despotic Premier at an age when, in these times, a politician could barely aspire to be an Under-Secretary. It is not wonderful that Lord Stanhope should have been attracted to a subject which is so interesting in itself, and which lies so precisely in the direction of his previous studies. From his high standing and his personal connections, he has been able to add much to our minuter knowledge. He has obtained from various quarters many valuable letters which have not been published before. There is a whole series from George III. to Mr Pitt, and a scarcely less curious series from Mr Pitt to his mother. We need not add that Lord Stanhope has digested his important materials with great care, that he has made of them almost as much as could be made ; that he has a warm admiration and a delicate respect for the great statesman of whom he is writing. His nearest approach to an ungentle feeling is a quiet dislike to the great Whig families.

Mr Pitt is an example of one of the modes in which the popular imagination is, even in historical times, frequently and easily misled. Mankind judge of a great statesman principally by the most marked and memorable passage in his career. By chance we lately had the

honour to travel with a gentleman who said that Sir Robert Peel was the "leader of the Whigs"; and though historical evidence will always prevent common opinion from becoming so absurd as this, it is undeniable that, in the popular fancy of young men, Sir Robert Peel is the Liberal minister who repealed the corn-laws and carried Catholic emancipation. The world is forgetting that he was once the favourite leader of the old Tory party—the steady opponent of Mr. Canning, and the steady adherent of Lord Sidmouth and Lord Eldon. We remember his great reforms, of which we daily feel the benefit; we forget that, during a complete political generation, he was the most plausible supporter of ancient prejudices, and the most decent advocate of inveterate abuses. Mr Pitt's fate has been very similar, but far less fortunate. The event in his life most deeply implanted in the popular memory is his resistance to the French Revolution; it is this which has made him the object of affection to extreme Tories, and of suspicion and distrust to reasonable Liberals. Yet no rash inference was ever more unfounded and false. It can be proved that, in all the other parts of Mr. Pitt's life, the natural tendency of his favourite plan was uniformly Liberal; that, at the time of the French Revolution itself, he only did what the immense majority of the English people, even of the cultivated English people, deliberately desired; that he did it anxiously, with many misgivings, and in opposition to his natural inclinations; that it is very dubious whether, in the temper of the French nation and the temper of the English nation, a war between them could by possibility have been avoided at that juncture; that, in his administration and under his auspices, the spirit of legislative improvement which characterizes modern times may almost be said to begin; that he was the first English minister who discussed political questions with the cultivated thoughtfulness and considerate discretion which seem to characterize us now; that, in

political instruction, he was immeasurably superior to Fox, and that in the practical application of just principles to ordinary events he was equally superior to Burke.

There are two kinds of statesmen to whom, at different times, representative government gives an opportunity and a career—dictators and administrators. There are certain men who are called in conjunctures of great danger to save the State. When national peril was imminent, all nations have felt it needful to select the best man who could be found—for better, for worse, to put unlimited trust in him; to allow him to do whatever he wished, and to leave undone whatever he did not approve of. The qualities which are necessary for a dictator are two—a commanding character and an original intellect. All other qualities are secondary. Regular industry, a conciliatory disposition, a power of logical exposition, and argumentative discussion, which are necessary to a parliamentary statesman in ordinary times, are not essential to the selected dictator of a particular juncture. If he have force of character to overawe men into trusting him, and originality of intellect sufficient to enable him to cope with the pressing, terrible, and critical events with which he is selected to cope, it is enough. Every subordinate shortcoming, every incidental defect, will be pardoned. “Save us!” is the cry of the moment; and, in the confident hope of safety, any deficiency will be overlooked, and any frailty pardoned.

The genius requisite for a great administrator is not so imposing, but it is, perhaps, equally rare, and needs a more peculiar combination of qualities. Ordinary administrators are very common: everyday life requires and produces everyday persons. But a really great administrator thinks not only of the day but of the morrow; does not only what he must but what he wants; is eager to extirpate every abuse, and on the watch for every improvement; is on a level with the

highest political thought of his time, and persuades his age to be ruled according to it—to permit him to embody it in policy and in laws. Administration in this large sense includes legislation, for it is concerned with the far-seeing regulation of future conduct, as well as with the limited management of the present. Great dictators are doubtless rare in political history ; but they are not more so than great administrators, such as we have just defined them. It is not easy to manage any age ; it is not easy to be on a level with the highest thought of any age, but to manage that age according to that highest thought is among the most arduous tasks of the world. The intellectual character of a dictator is noble but simple ; that of a great administrator and legislator is also complex.

The exact description of Mr. Pitt is, that he had in the most complete perfection the faculties of a great administrator, and that he added to it the commanding temperament, though not the creative intellect, of a great dictator. He was tried by long and prosperous years, which exercised to the utmost his peculiar faculties, which enabled him to effect brilliant triumphs of policy and of legislation : he was tried likewise by a terrible crisis, with which he had not the originality entirely to cope, which he did not understand as we understand it now, but in which he showed a hardihood of resolution and a consistency of action which captivated the English people, and which impressed the whole world.

A very slight survey of Mr. Pitt's career is all we have room for here ; indeed, it is not easy within the compass of an article to make any survey, however slight ; but we hope at least to show that peculiar training, peculiar opportunity, and peculiar ability, combined to make him what he was.

It may seem silly to observe that Mr. Pitt was the son of his father, and yet there is no doubt that it was a critical circumstance in the formation of his character. When he was born, as Lord Macaulay has described, his

father's name was the most celebrated in the whole civilized world ; every post brought the news of some victory or some great stroke of policy, and his imagination dwelt upon the realities before him "I am glad I am not the eldest son," he said. "I should like to speak in the House of Commons, like papa." And there are other sayings indicating an early ambition and an early consciousness of power. There is nothing extraordinary in this. Most boys are conceited ; most boys have a wonderful belief in their own power. "At sixteen," says Mr. Disraeli, "every one believes he is the most peculiar man who ever lived" And there is certainly no difficulty in imagining Mr. Disraeli thinking so. The difficulty is, not to entertain this proud belief, but to keep it ; not to have these lofty visions, but to hold them. Manhood comes, and with it come the plain facts of the world. There is no illusion in them ; they have a distinct teaching. "The world," they say definitely, "does not believe in you. You fancy you have a call to a great career, but no one else even imagines that you fancy it. You do not dare to say it out loud" Before the fear of ridicule and the touch of reality, the illusions of youth pass away, and with them goes all intellectual courage. We have no longer the hardihood, we have scarcely the wish to form our own creed, to think our own thoughts, to act upon our own belief ; we try to be sensible, and we end in being ordinary, we fear to be eccentric, and we end in being commonplace It is from this fate that the son of a commanding Prime Minister is at any rate preserved ; the world thinks about him ; the world alludes to him. He can speak "in the grand style," and he will not be laughed at, or not much. When we wonder at the indomitable resolution and the inflexible self-reliance which Mr. Pitt through life displayed, we may lessen our wonder by remembering that he never endured the bitter ignominy of youth ; that his self-confidence was never disheartened by being "an unknown man" ;

that he early received from fortune the inestimable permission *to be himself*

The education of Mr. Pitt was as favourable to the development of his peculiar powers as his position. The public education of England has very great merits, and is well fitted for the cultivation of the average Englishman ; but one at least of the qualities which fit it for training ordinary men unfit it for training an extraordinary man. Its greatest value to the mass of those who are brought up in it is its influence in diminishing their self-confidence. They are early brought into a little but rough world, which effects on a small scale what the real world will afterwards effect still more thoroughly on a large one. It teaches boys who are no better than other boys, that they are no better than other boys ; that the advantages of one are compensated by the advantages of others ; that the world is a miscellaneous and motley medley, in which it is not easy to conquer, and over which it is impossible to rule. But it is not desirable that a young man in Pitt's position should learn this lesson. If you are to train a man to be Prime Minister at five and twenty, you must not dishearten his self-confidence, though it be overweening ; you must not tame his energy, though it seem presumptuous. Ordinary men should and must be taught to fear the face of the world ; they are to be guided by its laws and regulated by its manners ; the one exceptional man, who is in his first youth to rule the world, must be trained not to fear it, but despise it.

The legitimate food of a self-relying nature is early solitude, and the most stimulating solitude is solitude in the midst of society. Mr. Pitt's education was of this kind entirely. He was educated at home during his whole boyhood. He was sent to Cambridge at a most unusually early age. He lived there almost wholly with Mr. Pretymen, his tutor. "While Mr. Pitt was undergraduate," writes that gentleman, "he never omitted attending chapel morning and evening in the

public hall, except when prevented by indisposition. Nor did he pass a single evening out of the college walls; indeed, most of his time was spent with me. During his whole residence at the university," Mr. Pretyman continues, "I never knew him spend an idle day, nor did he ever fail to attend me at the appointed hour." He did not make any friends, scarcely any social acquaintances till he had taken his degree. He passed very much of his time, his tutor tells us, in very severe study, and very much of it, as we may easily believe, in the most absorbing of early pleasures—the monotonous excitement of ambitious anticipation. On an inferior man, this sort of youth could have had but one effect—it must have made him a *prig*. But it had not that effect on Pitt. It contributed to make him a shy, haughty, and inaccessible man. Such he emerged from Cambridge, and such he continued through life to be; but he was preserved from the characteristic degradation of well-intentioned and erudite youth by two great counteracting influences,—a strong sense of humour and a genuine interest in great subjects. His sense of fun was, indeed, disguised from the vulgar by a rigid mask of grave dignity, but in private it was his strongest characteristic. "Don't tell me," he is said to have remarked, "of a man's being able to talk sense; every one can talk sense; can he talk nonsense?" And Mr. Wilberforce, the most cheerful of human beings, who had seen the most amusing society of his generation, always declared that Pitt's wit was the best which he had ever known. And it was likely to be; humour gains much by constant suppression, and at no time of life was Pitt ever wanting in dexterous words. No man who really cares for great things, and who sees the laughable side of little things, ever becomes a "*prig*".

While at Cambridge Pitt likewise paid, as his tutor tells us, great attention to what are now, in popular estimation, the characteristic studies of the place. His attainments in mathematics were probably not much

like the elaborate and exact knowledge which the higher wranglers now yearly carry away from the university ; but they were considerable for his time, and they comprehended the most instructive part of the subject, the first principles ; a vague hope, too, is expressed that he may read Newton's *Principia* "after some summer circuit," which, as we may easily suppose, was not realized.

Though the tutor's information is not very exact, we may accept his general testimony that Pitt was a good mathematician, according to the academic standing of that day. There is, indeed, strong corroborative evidence of the fact in Mr. Pitt's financial speeches. It is not easy to draw out the evidence in writing, and it would be very tiresome to read the evidence if it were drawn out ; but a skilful observer of the contrast between educated and uneducated language will find in Pitt many traces of mathematical studies. Raw argument and common-sense correctness come by nature, but only a preliminary education can give the final edge to accuracy in statement, and the last nicety to polished and penetrating discussion. In later life, the facile use of financial rhetoric was as familiar to Mr. Pitt as to Mr Gladstone.

His classical studies were pursued upon a plan suggested by his father, which was certainly well adapted for the particular case, though it would not be good for mankind in general. A sufficient experience proves that no one can be taught any language thoroughly and accurately except by composition in it ; and Mr. Pitt had apparently never practised any sort of composition in Greek or Latin, whether verse or prose. But, for the purpose of disciplining a student in *his own* language, the reverse practice of translating from the classical languages is the best single expedient which has ever been made use of. And to this Mr. Pitt was trained by his father from early boyhood. He was taught to read off the classics into the best English he

could find, never inserting a word with which he was not satisfied, but waiting till he found one with which he *was* satisfied. By constant practice he became so ready that he never stopped at all ; the right word always presented itself immediately. When he was asked in later life how he had acquired the mellifluous abundance of appropriate language with which he amazed and charmed the House of Commons, it was to this suggestion of his father that he at once imputed it.

To the probably unconscious influence of the same instructor we may ascribe his early interest in parliamentary conflict. We have before quoted the naïve expression of his boyish desire to be in the House of Commons. There is a still more curious story of him in very early youth. It is said, "He was introduced, on the steps of the throne in the House of Lords, to Mr. Fox, who was his senior by ten years, and already in the fullness of his fame. Fox used afterwards to relate that, as the discussion proceeded, Pitt repeatedly turned to him and said, 'But surely, Mr. Fox, that might be met thus,' or, 'Yes, but he lays himself open to retort.' What the particular criticisms were Fox had forgotten ; but he said that he was much struck at the time by the precocity of a lad who through the whole sitting was thinking only how all the speeches on both sides could be answered."

Nor were his political studies confined to the studious cultivation of oratorical language, or to a thorough acquisition of the art of argumentative fence : he attended also to the *substance* of political science. He was the first great English statesman who read, understood, and valued *The Wealth of Nations*. Fox had "no great opinion of *those* reasonings" ; and the doctrines of free trade, though present, like all great political ideas, to the overflowing mind of Burke, were, like all his ideas, at the daily mercy of his eager passions and his intense and vivid imagination. Mr. Pitt, as it would seem, while still at college, acquired and arranged them

with the collected consistency which was the characteristic of his mind. So thorough a training, in the superficial accomplishments, the peculiar associations, and the abstract studies of political life, has not perhaps fallen to the lot of any other English statesman.

Nor was the political opportunity of Mr Pitt at all inferior to his political training. The history of the first twenty years of the reign of George III is a history of his struggles with the aristocratic proprietors of parliamentary boroughs. Neither the extension of the power of the Crown, nor the maintenance of the political ascendancy of the Whig families, was very popular with the nation at large ; the popular element in the Constitution was for the most part neutral in the conflict, it reserved the greater part of its influence for objects more interesting to itself ; but between the two parties, between the Crown and the great borough proprietors, the strife was eager, intense, and unremitting.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained, the situation in which a constitutional king was placed under the old system of an unreformed Parliament was more than an energetic man could endure. According to the theory of that government, the patronage of the Crown was to be used to purchase votes in Parliament, and to maintain a parliamentary majority by constant bargains with borough proprietors.

“ But who is to use the patronage ? The theory assumes that it is to be used by the minister of the day. According to it, the head of the party which is predominant in Parliament is to employ the patronage of the Crown for the purpose of confirming that predominance. But suppose that the Crown chooses to object to this, suppose that the king for the time being should say, ‘ This patronage is mine ; the places in question are places in my service, the pensions in question are pensions from me. I will myself have at least some share in the influence that is acquired by the conferring of those pensions and the distribution of those places ’. George III. actually did say

this He was a king in one respect among a thousand ; he was willing to do the work of a Secretary of the Treasury , his letters for very many years are filled with the petty details of patronage ; he directed who should have what, and stipulated who should not have anything. This interference of the king must evidently in theory, and did certainly in fact, destroy the efficiency of the alleged expedient. Very much of the patronage of the Crown went, not to the adherents of the prime minister, because they were his adherents, but to the king's friends, because they were his friends Many writers have been very severe on George III for taking the course which he did take, and have frequently repeated the well-known maxims, which show that what he did was a deviation from the Constitution Very likely it was ; but what is the use of a Constitution which takes no account of the ordinary motives of human nature ? It was inevitable that an ambitious king, who had industry enough to act as he did, would so act Let us consider his position He was invested with authority which was apparently great He was surrounded by noblemen and gentlemen who passed their life in paying him homage, and in professing perhaps excessive doctrines of loyal obedience to him When the Duke of Devonshire, or the Duke of Bedford, or the Duke of Newcastle, approached the royal closet, they implied by words and manner that he had immeasurably more power than they had In fact, it was expected that he should have immeasurably less It was expected that, though these noblemen daily acknowledged that he was their superior, he should constantly act as if he were their inferior. The prime minister was in reality appointed by them, and it was expected that the king should do what the prime minister told him ; that he should assent to measures on which he was not consulted , that he should make peace when Mr Grenville said peace was right , that he should make war whenever Mr Grenville said war was right , that he should allow the offices of his household and the dignities of his court to be used as a means for the support of cabinets whose members he disliked, and whose policy he disapproved of. It is evident that no man who was not imbecile would be content with such a position It is not difficult to bear to be without power, it is not very difficult to bear to have only the mockery of power ; but it is unbearable to have real

power, and to be told that you must content yourself with the mockery of it ; it is unendurable to have in your hands an effectual instrument of substantial influence, and also to act day by day as a pageant, without any influence whatever. Human nature has never endured this, and we may be quite sure that it never will endure it. It is a fundamental error in the 'esoteric theory' of the Tory party, that it assumed the king and the prime minister to be always of the same mind, while they often were of different minds." \*

By a series of stratagems George III. at last obtained, in the person of Lord North, a minister who combined a sufficient amount of parliamentary support with an unlimited devotion to the royal pleasure. He was a minister of great ability, great parliamentary tact, unbounded good humour, and no firmness. He yielded everything to the intense, eager, petty incisiveness of his sovereign. The king was the true minister for all purposes of policy and business. Lord North was only the talking minister of the present French Assemblies, who is bound to explain and to defend measures which he did not suggest, and about which he was not consulted.

It is difficult to say how long Lord North's Government might not have continued, if it had not been for the military calamities of the American War. That war had been very popular at its commencement, and continued popular as long as it was likely to be successful. It became unpopular as soon as it was likely to fail. The merchants began to murmur at the stoppage of trade. The country gentlemen began to murmur at the oppressive burden of war-taxes. The nation began to reconsider its opinion as to the justice of the quarrel, as soon as it appeared that our military efforts would probably be disastrous. Lord North shared in these feelings ; he did not believe the war would succeed ;

\* *Essays on Parliamentary Reform*, p 154 By Walter Bagehot. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883

no longer hoped it would succeed ; no longer thought that there was any motive for continuing to carry it on, but for several years he did continue to carry it on. The will of George III. was a very efficient force on every one just about him, and his personal ascendancy over many men intellectually far his superiors is a curious example of the immense influence of a distinct judgment and inflexible decision, with fair abilities and indefatigable industry, and placed in a close contact with great men and great affairs

At length, in March 1782, the calamitous issue of the American War became too evident, and Lord North resigned. Lord Holland gives us a curious history of the mode in which he announced to the House that he

was no longer Prime Minister.

" I have heard my uncle Fitzpatrick give a very diverting account of the scene that passed in the House of Commons on the day of Lord North's resignation, which happened to be a remarkably cold day, with a fall of snow. A motion of Lord Surrey's for the dismissal of ministers stood for that day, and the Whigs were anxious that it should come on before the resignation of Lord North was officially announced, that his removal from office might be more manifestly and formally the act of the House of Commons. He and Lord Surrey rose at the same instant. After much clamour, disorder, and some insignificant speeches on order, Mr. Fox, with great quickness and address, moved, as the most regular method of extricating the House from its embarrassment, ' That Lord Surrey be now heard.' But Lord North, with yet more admirable presence of mind, mixed with pleasantry, rose immediately and said, ' I rise to speak to that motion ; ' and, as his reason for opposing it, stated his resignation and the dissolution of the Ministry. The House, satisfied, became impatient, and after some ineffectual efforts of speakers on both sides to procure a hearing, an adjournment took place. Snow was falling and the night tremendous. All the members' carriages were dismissed, and Mrs. Bennet's room at the door was crowded. But Lord North's carriage was waiting. He put into it one or two of his friends, whom he had

invited to go home with him ; and turning to the crowd, chiefly composed of his bitter enemies, in the midst of their triumph, exclaimed, in this hour of defeat and supposed mortification, with admirable good-humour and pleasantry, ' I have my carriage. You see, gentlemen, the advantage of being in the secret Good-night.' "

Such acquiescent *bonhomie* is admirable, no doubt ; but easy good-nature is no virtue for a man of action, least of all for a practical politician in critical times. It was Lord North's " happy temper " which first made him the mean slave of George III , which afterwards induced him to ally himself with the most virulent assailants of that monarch, and, at a preceding period, of himself

When Lord North resigned, it was natural that the leaders of the Opposition should come at once into predominant power ; but a ministerial crisis in the early part of George III 's reign was never permitted to proceed in what is now fixed as the constitutional etiquette. The King always interfered with it. On this occasion, the only political party who could take office was that which, under the judicious guidance of Lord Rockingham, and supported by the unequalled oratory of Fox and Burke, had consistently opposed the American War. But the leaders of this party were personally disliked by George III. Lord Rockingham he had once before called " one of the most insignificant noblemen in my service " Mr Fox, from a curious combination of causes, he hated. Accordingly, though it was necessary for him to treat with Lord Rockingham and his friends, he did not treat with them directly. He employed as an intermediate agent Lord Shelburne, the father of the present Marquis of Lansdowne, a politician whom it is not difficult to describe, but whom it is difficult really to understand. Policemen tell us that there is such a character as a " reputed thief," who has never been convicted of any particular act of thievery. Lord Shelburne was precisely that character

in political life ; every one always said he was dishonest, but no particular act of dishonesty has ever been brought home to him It is not for us now to discuss the dubious peculiarities of so singular a character. But it will be admitted that it was a most unfortunate one for conducting the delicate personal negotiations inevitable on the formation of a Cabinet, and that it specially unfitted the person believed to possess it to be a good go-between a king who hated the Opposition and an Opposition who distrusted the King. The inevitable result followed : every member of the incoming party was displeased with the King , every one disbelieved the assertions of Lord Shelburne , every one distrusted the solidity of a ministry constructed in a manner so anomalous A ministry, however, was constructed, of which Lord Shelburne and Lord Rockingham were both members ; and both, Mr. Fox said, intended to be Prime Ministers

Lord Rockingham must evidently have been a man of very fine and delicate judgment. He could not speak in the House of Lords, and his letters are rather awkwardly expressed , but those who compare the history of the Whig party for some years before his death with the history of that party for some years after it, and those who compare the career of Burke for the same two periods, will perceive that both over the turbulence of the great party and the turbulence of the great orator the same almost invisible discretion exercised a guiding and restraining control After Lord Rockingham's death, both the Whig party and Mr Burke committed great errors and fell into lamentable excesses, which were entirely unlike anything which happened while he was yet alive If he had been permitted to exercise a composing influence, it is possible that the ministry we have described might have lasted , but, unfortunately, within three months after its formation he fell ill and died. Mr Fox, who had just been quarrelling with Lord Shelburne, refused to serve under him and sent in his

resignation ; and his example was followed by Burke, and by most of the followers of Lord Rockingham

Lord Shelburne, however, still intended to be Prime Minister. The King was in his favour. The Whigs had no great aristocratic leader. The Duke of Portland, who was put forward as such, had no powers of speech and but feeble powers of thought. There was no difference of political opinion which need have separated any Whig from Shelburne. He was therefore justified in hoping that if he persevered he might rally round him in no long time the greater portion of the Whig party, notwithstanding the secession of its present leaders. He doubtless hoped also, by taking advantage of the various influences of the Crown, to attach to himself very many of the followers of Lord North, who were the old adherents of the Crown. But these were anticipations only. For the moment he was more completely separated from the parliamentary ability of his age than any minister has since been. He came into office in opposition to Lord North and one great party ; he remained in office in opposition to Fox and Burke, the leaders of the other great party. The trained leaders of the old Ministry and the trained leaders of the old Opposition were both opposed to him. If he decided to remain Prime Minister, it was necessary for him to take some bold step. He did so. He made Mr Pitt Chancellor of the Exchequer and the leader of the House of Commons, though he was but twenty-three.

Such singular good fortune has never happened to any English statesman since parliamentary government in this country has been consolidated into its present form, and it is very unlikely that anything like it can ever happen again. Perhaps no man of twenty-three could get through the quantity of work that is now required to fill the two offices of Finance Minister and leader of the House of Commons. In Pitt's time the Chancellor of the Exchequer (he himself tells us) needed no private secretary , he had no business requiring any.

The leader of the House of Commons did not even require one-tenth part of the ready available miscellaneous information which he must now have at his command, and most of which cannot be learned from any books To fill the offices which Mr. Pitt filled at twenty-three, it would in this age be necessary that a man should have a trained faculty of transacting business rapidly, which no man of twenty-three can have ; and that he should have also a varied knowledge of half a hundred subjects, which no college can teach, and which no book of reference will ever contain Mr. Pitt, however, met with no difficulty Though the finances of the country had been disordered by the American War, and though the Ministry was daily assailed by the dexterous good-humour of Lord North and the vehement invectives of Fox and Burke, "the boy," as they called him, was successful in his Budget, and successful in his management of the House of Commons. It soon, however, became evident that Lord Shelburne's Ministry could not stand long. There were three parties in the House, and a coalition of any two was sufficient to outnumber any one According to a calculation preserved in a letter from Gibbon, everything depended on the decision of Mr. Fox If he returned to the Government, it would be strong ; if he allied himself with Lord North, it must fail He did ally himself with Lord North, and Lord Shelburne resigned

The coalition between Fox and Lord North is not defended even by Lord John Russell, who defends almost every act in the political life of his great hero Indeed, it was not likely that he would defend it, for to it we owe the almost unbroken subjection of the Whigs, and the almost unbroken reign of the Tories, for five and twenty years

No political alliance in English history has been more unpopular than this Coalition. For once the King and the people were on the same side, and that side the right side. During by far the greater part of his reign

the wishes of George III were either opposed to the wishes of his people, or the wishes of the two, though identical, were pernicious. During the first part of his reign his attempts to increase the royal influence were generally unpopular; during the latter part, he and his people were both favourable to the American War and to the French War, with what result history shows. But at the period of which we are speaking, both the prominent prejudices of the King and the deepest feelings of the people were offended by the same event. The Coalition deeply annoyed the King. It was hateful to him that his favourite, Lord North, who had been his confidential minister for years, who was enriched with the marks of his bounty and good-will, who was the leader of many politicians always biased in favour of the Crown, and always anxious to support its influence if they could, should after all ally himself with Mr. Fox, who had opposed the Crown for years; who had called its latent influence "an infernal spirit"; who was the leader of the party opposed to the American War, and therefore, in the King's view, of the party which had advocated treason and abetted the disruption of the empire, who, worse than all, was the companion and encourager of the Prince of Wales in every species of dissipation; who introduced him to haunts and countenanced him in habits which made the very heart of an economical and decorous monarch horrified and angry. who at that very moment was endeavouring to make "capital," as we should now say, out of the political prospects and present influence of his profligate associate. George III used to call the "Coalition Ministry" his son's ministry, and he could not embody his detestation of it in terms more expressive, to those who knew their meaning. On the other hand, the people were not unnaturally offended also. The Coalition brought into very clear prominence the most characteristic weakness of our unreformed Constitution. Though it professed to be, and really was, a popular

Constitution, the people could not be induced to believe that they had much concern in it. The members chosen by popular election were a minority, those nominated by aristocratic and indirect influence were a majority. Accordingly, most men believed, or were prone to believe, that the struggles in Parliament were faction-fights for place and power; that the interest of the nation had little to do with them, or nothing, that they were contests for political power, and for the rich pecuniary rewards which influential office then conferred. The Coalition seemed to prove that this was so even to demonstration. If there ever had been a *bona fide*, and not a simulated, struggle in Parliament, it was the struggle between Fox and Lord North. They had opposed one another for years, Fox had heaped on Lord North every term of invective, opprobrium, and contempt; Lord North had said everything which a good-natured and passive man *could* say in reply. They had taken different sides both on the obvious question which had been the dividing and critical one of the last few years, and on the latent question which was the real one underlying the greater part of the controversies of the age and giving to them most of their importance. Lord North was the great parliamentary advocate of the American War, Fox was its most celebrated and effective opponent. Lord North was the most decent agent, and the most successful co-operator, whom George III had yet found in his incessant policy of maintaining and augmenting the power of the Crown. Fox was known to be opposed to that policy with all his mind, soul, and strength; he was known to have heaped upon that policy every bitter term of contempt, opprobrium, and execration which the English language contains, he was known to have incurred the bitter hatred of George III by so doing. With these facts before them, what could the nation infer when they saw these two statesmen combine for the evident purpose of obtaining immediate

office? They could only say what they did. They said at once that the Coalition must be dishonest if the previous opposition had been real, and that the coalescing statesmen were utterly untrustworthy if that opposition had been simulated.

The Government of the Coalition was not, however, destined to be durable. George III was a dangerous man to drive to extremity. Though without great creative ability, he had dexterous powers of political management, cultivated by long habit and experience; he had an eager obstinacy allied to the obstinacy of insanity; it was not safe to try him too far. The Coalition Government, however, tried him as far as it was possible. They framed an India Bill, giving the patronage of India to commissioners, to be from time to time nominated by Parliament, to be irremovable by the Crown, the first of whom were to be nominated by themselves. The King was enraged at a scheme so injurious to his secret influence. He considered that it was a scheme for enabling Mr. Fox to buy votes in Parliament. Lord Fitzwilliam, his intimate political friend, was to be at the head of the new Board; and it was expected, perhaps intended, that the Board should be an independent instrument of parliamentary power at the service of the aristocratic Whigs, and in daily opposition to the influence of the Crown—to that personal influence which George III had all his life been hoarding and acquiring. The people were almost as much enraged at the scheme as the King himself. They thought that the politicians who had just formed a corrupt coalition to obtain office were now providing a corrupt expedient for retaining that office. "Being dishonest themselves," it was said, "they are providing themselves with the means of purchasing the votes of others who are dishonest likewise." The exact value of these accusations we have not space to estimate now; something might certainly be said in extenuation, if it were needful, but at the time the popular feeling was

powerfully excited by them ; they were expressed by Pitt with marvellous force and marvellous variety, and re-echoed through the nation.

The parliamentary influence of the Coalition Government, which was supported by the greater part of the borough proprietors, both Whig and Tory, was, however, sufficient to carry their India Bill through the House of Commons by majorities which would now be considered very large. It reached the House of Lords, and would have passed that House too, if George III. had not taken one of the most curious steps in our constitutional history. He wrote on a card : " His Majesty allowed Earl Temple to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy , and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose "

Such was the influence of the Crown, such was especially the personal influence which George III had acquired by steady industry and incessant attention to the personalities of politics, that the fate of the India Bill in the Lords very soon became dubious. "The bishops wavered , " the staunchest followers ( Lord North especially, being high Tories, became uncertain , and in the end the Bill was rejected by majority of ninety-five over seventy-six

Nor did the King's active influence stop here. The Coalition Ministry did not resign, although their principal measure had been rejected in the Lords, they induced the House of Commons to resolve that it was a breach of the privilege of Parliament to attempt to influence votes in either House by announcing " any opinion or pretended opinion of His Majesty." The Ministry was passive in its place , but George III was never deterred by minor difficulties. He sent his commands at midnight to Mr Fox and Lord North to deliver up the seals of office, and to send them

by their under-secretaries, as he must decline to see them in person. By this parliamentary *coup d'état* he broke up an administration which, though unpopular in the country, was supported by the "great owners" of parliamentary influence and an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons

But who was to come in ? That the King could turn out the old Ministry was very clear, for he had done so , but that he could form a Ministry that could last in such circumstances seemed unlikely ; that he could form any Ministry at all was not evident. Political expectation was very eager As soon as the House met on the day after the midnight dismissal, a new writ was moved for the borough of Appleby, " in the room of the Right Honourable William Pitt, who, since his election, has accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer." The announcement was received with laughter, for it seemed unlikely that an ambitious boy (such was the speech of the time) should be able to carry on the government, and to lead the House of Commons in the face of an adverse majority, in direct opposition to the most experienced statesmen, the most practised debaters, and the most skilful manœuvrers of his age

Mr. Pitt was only twenty-five, and he had no one to rely on Mr. Dundas was a useful subordinate and an efficient man of business, but he was not a great statesman or a great orator, and he *was* a Scotch adventurer. In the Lords, Mr. Pitt was confident of the support of Lord Temple, who had effected the defeat of the India Bill by use of the King's name ; but Lord Temple wanted to be paid. He had great borough connections, which gave him permanent claims on every Government , he had just turned out the old Government, which gave him a peculiar claim upon the favour of the new. He asked for a dukedom, and was refused The King thought he had asked too much, and perhaps believed that it would be most dangerous at that critical

moment to give the highest of honorary rewards to the principal agent in an alarming act of royal influence. At any rate, the application was declined, and Lord Temple resigned. Mr. Pitt was thus left almost alone. His Cabinet consisted of but seven persons, and he himself was the only member of the House of Commons among those seven.

Everybody expected that Parliament would be immediately dissolved. As Mr. Pitt was evidently in a minority in the House of Commons which then existed, it was confidently believed that he would at once see whether he would not have a majority in a new House of Commons. He was too wary, however, to do so. In that age, public opinion formed itself slowly and declared itself slowly. The nation, as far as it had an opinion, was in favour of the new administration; but in many parts of the country there was no opinion. Delay was in favour of the side which had the advantage in telling argument, and so strong were the objections of reasonable and moderate men to the coalition between Fox and Lord North—so entirely was their India Bill interpreted by the help of that connection, and regarded in its relation to it—that every day's discussion made converts. The members for close boroughs, and for counties in which individual interest predominated, were, it is true, a majority in the House of Commons, and they adhered for the most part to the Coalition. But the strength so obtained was always weak at a trying crisis. The same influences acted on the borough proprietors which acted upon others, and they never liked to be opposed to the national will when it was distinctly declared. Nor had the extreme partisans of either party ever liked the coalition of the two parties. The warmest Whigs were alienated from Fox, and the strongest Tories were alienated from Lord North. The majority of Fox began to waver, and the minority of Pitt began to augment. Every division showed a tendency in the same direction. Pitt maintained the struggle with

dauntless courage and unbounded dialectical dexterity against all the orators in the House of Commons. The event began to be doubtful. In the unreformed Parliament no more was necessary. A large section of every part was attached to it by the hope of patronage; it had been bought by promises of that patronage. As the present writer has elsewhere explained, the strength so obtained was unstable.

"It especially failed at the moment at which it was especially wanted. A majority in Parliament which is united by a sincere opinion, and is combined to carry out that opinion, is in some sense secure. As long as that opinion is unchanged, it will remain, it can only be destroyed by weakening the conviction which binds it together. A majority which is obtained by the employment of patronage is very different, it is combined mainly by *an expectation*. Sir Robert Walpole, the great master in the art of dispensing patronage, defined gratitude as an anticipation of future favours, he meant that the majority which maintained his administration was collected, not by recollection, but by hope, they thought not so much of favours which were past as of favours which were to come. At a critical moment this bond of union was ordinarily weak."\*

As soon as it seemed likely that Mr. Pitt would be victorious, the selfish part of the followers of the Coalition—a very large part—began to go over to Mr. Pitt. The last motion of Mr. Fox was carried by a majority of *one*.

Mr. Pitt then saw that his time had come; he dissolved Parliament, and his triumph was complete. The popular feeling was overwhelming. It prevailed even in the strongholds of the Whig aristocracy. "Thus in Norfolk," says Lord Stanhope, "the late member had been Mr. Coke, lord of the vast domains of Holkham, a gentleman who, according to his own opinion, as stated

\* *Essays on Parliamentary Reform*, p 157 By Walter Bagehot  
Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1883

in his address to the county, had played 'a distinguished part' in opposing the American War. But notwithstanding his alleged claims of distinction, and his much more certain claims of property, Mr Coke found it necessary to decline the contest." But of all the contests of this period, the most important in that point of view was for the county of York. That great county, not yet at election times severed into Ridings, had been under the sway of the Whig houses. Bolton Abbey, Castle Howard, and Wentworth Park had claimed the right to dictate at the hustings. It was not till 1780 that the spirit of the country rose "Hitherto"—so in that year spoke Sir George Savile—"I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room. Now I am returned by my constituents." And in 1784 the spirit of the country rose higher still. In 1784 the independent freeholders of Yorkshire boldly confronted the great houses, and insisted on returning, in conjunction with the heir of Duncombe Park, a banker's son, of few years and of scarcely tried abilities, though destined to a high place in his country's annals—Mr Wilberforce. With the help of the country gentlemen, they raised the vast sum of £18,662 for the expense of the election, and so great was their show of numbers and of resolution, that the candidates upon the other side did not venture to stand a contest. Wilberforce was also returned at the head of the poll by his former constituents at Hull. "I can never congratulate you enough on such glorious success," wrote the Prime Minister to his young friend. One hundred and sixty followers of Mr Fox lost their seats, and were called "Fox's martyrs." The majority for Pitt in the new Parliament was complete, overwhelming, and enthusiastic.

The constitutional aspect of the events of 1784 has been much discussed, and well merits discussion. It is certain that George III did much that was, according to the good notions now fixedly established, thoroughly unconstitutional, it is certain that scarcely any one

will, upon any constitutional doctrines, new or old, defend the "card" displayed by Lord Temple. But, if we had room to argue the subject, we think it might be shown that it would have been inexpedient to apply, in the year 1784, the strict constitutional maxims on which we should act in the year 1861; that the beneficial relations, and that the inevitable relations of the Parliament and the Crown, were different then from what they are now; that, under such an aristocratic Legislature as the unreformed Parliament principally was, it was needful that the Crown should sometimes intervene, when the opinion of Parliament was opposed to the opinion of the people, that, in times when public opinion was formed but slowly, it was advisable that the Crown should do so, not by an instant dissolution of the House of Commons, as we should now exact, but by a deferred dissolution, which would enable the thinking part of the community to reflect, and give the whole country, far and near, time to form a real judgment.

But at present we have to deal with the events of 1784, not in their relation to the Constitution of England, but in their relation to the life of Mr. Pitt. They were the completion of his opportunity. But a short time previously the political isolation of Lord Shelburne had made him Chancellor of the Exchequer at a boyish age; the isolation of George III now made him Prime Minister while still very young. The first good fortune would have been a marvel in the life of any other man, but was nothing to the marvel of the second. By a strange course of great incidents he was in the most commanding position which an English subject has ever occupied since parliamentary government was thoroughly established in the country. The victory was so complete, that the mercenaries of the enemy had deserted to his standard. The Crown was necessarily on his side, for he alone stood between George III. and the hated Coalition, which he had discarded and insulted, the people were on his side, from a hatred of the official

corruption of which they considered his opponents to be the representatives and the embodiments, from a firm belief in his true integrity, from a proud admiration of his single-handed courage and audacious self-reliance. He had the power to do what he would.

Nor was this all. The opportunity was not only a great opportunity, but was an opportunity in the hands of a *young man*. Half of our greatest statesmen would have been wholly unprepared for it. When Lord Palmerston was in office in the spring of 1857 with a large majority, a shrewd observer, now no longer among us, said, "Well, it is a large majority; but what is he to do with it?" He did not know himself; by paltry errors and frivolous haughtiness he frittered it away immediately. An old man of the world has no great objects, no telling enthusiasm, no large proposals, no noble reforms; his advice is that of the old banker, "Live, sir, from day to day, and don't trouble yourself!" Years of acquiescing in proposals as to which he has not been consulted, of voting for measures which he did not frame, and in the wisdom of which he often did not believe, of arguing for proposals from half of which he dissents — usually deintellectualize a parliamentary statesman before he comes to half his power. From all this Pitt was exempt. He came to great power with a fresh mind. And not only so: he came into power with the cultivated thought of a new generation. Too many of us scarcely remember how young a man he was. He was born in 1759, and might have well been in the vigour of life in 1830. Lord Sidmouth, his contemporary, did not die till after 1840, he was younger than his cousin, Mr Thomas Grenville, who long represented in London society the traditions of the past, and who died in 1846. He governed men of the generation before him. Alone among English statesmen, while yet a youth he was governing middle-aged men. He had the power of applying the eager thought of five and twenty, of making it rule over the petty knowledge and

trained acquiescence of five and fifty. Alone as yet, and alone perhaps for ever in our parliamentary history, while his own mind was still original, while his own spirit was still unbroken, he was able to impose an absolute yoke on acquiescent spirits whom the world had broken for him

We have expended so much space on a delineation of the peculiar opportunities which Mr. Pitt enjoyed that we must be very concise in showing how he used them. Three subjects then needed the attention of a great statesman, though none of them were so pressing as to force themselves on the attention of a little statesman. These were, our economical and financial legislation, the imperfection of our parliamentary representation, and the unhappy condition of Ireland Pitt dealt with all three.

Our economical legislation was partly in an uncared-for state, and partly in an ill-cared-for state Our customs laws were a chaos of confusion Innumerable Acts of Parliament had been passed on temporary occasions and for temporary purposes, blunders had been discovered in them, other Acts were passed to amend those blunders, those other Acts contained other blunders ; new corrective legislation was required, and here too there were errors, omissions, and imperfections And in so far as our economical legislation was based upon a theory, that theory was a very mistaken one ; it was the theory of Protection The first duty of the English Legislature, it was believed, was to develop English industry and to injure foreign industry. Our manufactures, it was thought, could be made better by Acts of Parliament ; the manufactures of our rivals, it was believed, could be made worse The industry of the nation worked in a complicated network of fetters and bonds.

Mr. Pitt applied himself vigorously to this chaos He brought in a series of resolutions consolidating our customs laws, of which the inevitable complexity may

be estimated by their number. They amounted to 133, and the number of Acts of Parliament which they restrained or completed was much greater. He attempted, and successfully, to apply the principles of Free Trade, the principles which he was the first of English statesmen to learn from Adam Smith, to the actual commerce of the country, and to the part of our commerce which afforded the greatest temptations to a philosophic statesman, and presented the greatest accumulation of irritable and stupid prejudice. France and England were near one another, but had no trade with one another, no such trade, at least, as two countries so different in soil, in climate, and in natural aptitude, ought to have. So far from either nation much wishing to trade with the other, neither wished to depend on the other for anything. The national dignity was supposed to be compromised by buying from an ancient rival. Mr Pitt, however, framed a treaty which, if its consequences had not been swept away with so much else, both good and evil, in the European storm of the French Revolution, would have been quoted as the true commencement of Free Trade legislation; would have been referred to as we now refer to the tentative reforms of Huskisson, and to the earlier Budgets of Sir Robert Peel. So little was the subject then understood, even by those most likely to understand it, that both Fox and Burke opposed the treaty with virulence and vehemence, declaring that France was our natural enemy, and that it was unworthy of any one who pretended to be a statesman to create a "peddling traffic," and maintain "huckstering" relations with her.

The financial reputation of Pitt has greatly suffered from the absurd praise which was once lavished on the worst part of it. The dread of national ruin from the augmentation of the National Debt was a sort of nightmare in that age; the evil was apparent, and the counteracting force was not seen. No one perceived that

English industry was yearly growing with an accelerating rapidity, no one foresaw that in a few years it would be aided by a hundred wonderful inventions—by the innumerable results of applied science; no one comprehended that the national estate was augmenting far faster than the national burden. The popular mind was apprehensive, and wished to see some remedy applied to what seemed to be an evident and dangerous evil. Mr Pitt sympathized with the general apprehension, and created the well-known *Sinking Fund*. He proposed to apply annually a certain fixed sum to the payment of the debt, which was in itself excellent; but he omitted to provide real money to be so paid. The only source out of which debt can be defrayed, as every one now understands, is a surplus revenue; out of an empty exchequer no claims can ever be liquidated by possibility: an excess of income over outlay is a prerequisite of a true repayment. Mr. Pitt, however, not only did not see this, but persuaded a whole generation that it was not so. He proposed to borrow the money to pay off the debt, and fancied that he thus diminished it. He had framed a puzzle in compound interest, which deceived himself, and every one who was entrusted with the national finances, for very many years.

The exposure of this financial juggle—for though not intended to be so, such in fact it was—has reacted very unfavourably upon Mr. Pitt's deserved fame. It was so long said “that he was a great financier *because* he invented the Sinking Fund,” that it came at last to be believed that he could not be a great financier inasmuch as he had invented it. So much merit had been claimed for something bad, that no search was made for anything good. But an accurate study of these times will prove that Pitt was really one of the greatest financiers in our history, that he repaired the great disorders of the American War, that he restored a surplus revenue, that he understood the true principles of taxation, that he even knew that the best way to increase a revenue

from the consumption of the masses is to lower the rate of duty and develop their consuming power

The subject of parliamentary reform is the one with which, in Mr. Pitt's early days, the public most connected his name, and is also that with which we are now least apt to connect it. We have so long and so often heard him treated as the great Conservative minister, that we can hardly realize to ourselves that he was an unsparing and ardent reformer. Yet such is the indisputable fact. He proposed the abolition of the worst of the rotten boroughs fifty years before Lord Grey accomplished it. The period was a favourable one for reform. The failure of the American War had left behind it a bitter irritation and an anxious self-reproach. Why had we, with our great wealth, our great valour, our long experience, failed in what seemed a trivial enterprise? Why had we been put to shame in the face of Europe? Why had we been forced to humble ourselves in the face of Europe? Why had we been compelled to make an ignominious peace? Why had we, one of the greatest of civilized States, failed to conquer a raw and unknown colony? The popular answer was that our arms had been unsuccessful because our Government was corrupt. The practical working of our unreformed Constitution has been tersely described as the barter of patronage for power; the parliamentary majorities of that age were kept by an incessant commerce between the proprietors of seats who sold and the Secretary of the Treasury who bought. In the present day refined arguments are often brought forward to justify or to palliate the system of government. But whatever may be the abstract worth of those arguments, their practical worth is not great. They will never convince the mass of men; they will never satisfy the unsophisticated instinct of ordinary men; they will not remove their natural distrust of what they believe to be unpatriotic selfishness; they will not lessen their conscientious repugnance to that which they call cor-

ruption. After the disasters of the American War, this feeling was very strong and very diffused. An unpopular tree was judged of by unpopular fruits ; our calamities were evident, and our corruption was conspicuous. A most distinct association of the two was formed in the popular mind. Of this Mr. Pitt took advantage. If the strong, counteracting influence of the French Revolution had not changed the national opinion, he would unquestionably have amended our parliamentary representation. Even after the French Revolution he never changed his own opinion ; he considered that the time was not favourable for what we now call organic changes ; and he judged wisely, for the mass of the nation was wildly and frantically Conservative ; but he did not abandon his early principles , he never became a " Pittite "

The state of Ireland was a more pressing difficulty than our financial confusion, our economical errors, or our parliamentary corruption It had an independent Legislature, which might at any time take a dangerously different view of national interests, of the expediency of a peace, or the expediency of a war, from the English Parliament That Legislature was a Protestant Legislature in the midst of a Catholic people , it was the Legislature of a small and hated minority in the midst of an excitable, tumultuous, oppressed people. The mass of the Irish Catholics believed that the mass of the property, which belonged in fact to the Protestants, was in strict right theirs , they believed that they were the true owners of the soil, and that the Protestants were intruders , they believed that they had a right to govern the country, and that the Protestants were usurpers ; they believed that the Church which the State supported was a heretic Church ; that the Church which the State did not support was the true Church—the only true Church in Christendom. In every parish the distinction between Protestant and Catholic was periodically ruled by the most critical of tests—the

pecuniary test. The collection of the tithe in detail over the country, from the Catholic population for the Protestant Church, was the source of chronic confusion and incessant bloodshed. Mr. Pitt proposed to remedy all these evils in turn, and effectually. He proposed to remedy the most immediate and pressing cause of trouble throughout the country by changing—as has since been done—the periodical extortion of the Irish tithe from the hostile farmer into an equivalent payment by a rent-charge, which could be easily collected and could give rise to no disgraceful scenes. He proposed to put the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority upon a perfect equality so far as civil rights were concerned. He was desirous that Catholics should be eligible to all offices, and be electors for all offices. He was ready likewise to destroy the prevalent religious agitation at its very root, by paying the ministers of the Church of the poor as well as the ministers of the Church of the rich. He proposed at once to remedy the national danger of having two Parliaments, and to remove the incredible corruption of the old Irish Parliament, by uniting the three kingdoms in a single representative system, of which the Parliament should sit in England. He framed, in a word, a scheme which would have cured the internal divisions of Ireland, which would have united her effectually to the empire without impairing her real liberty.

Of these great reforms he was only permitted to carry a few into execution. His power, as we have described it, was great when his reign commenced, and very great it continued to be for very many years; but the time became unfavourable for all forward-looking statesmanship—for everything which could be called innovation. The French Revolution and the French War destroyed for many years our national taste for political improvement. But, notwithstanding these calamities, Pitt achieved some part of all his cherished schemes save one. No opportunity would have enabled Pitt to effect

these great reforms, no peculiar situation would have suggested them to him, if he had not had certain more than ordinary tendencies and abilities—the tendencies and abilities of a great administrator. Contrary to what might at first sight be supposed, using the word "administrator" in its most enlarged sense—in the sense in which we used it at the commencement of this article—the first qualification of the highest administrator is, that he should think of something which he need not think of—of something which is not the pressing difficulty of the hour. For inferior men no rule could be so dangerous Ambitious mediocrity is dangerous mediocrity, ordinary men find what they must do amply enough for them to do, the exacting difficulty of the hour, which will not be stayed, which must be met, absorbs their whole time and all their energies. But the ideal administrator has time, has mind—for that is the difficulty—for something more, he can do what he must, and he will do what he wishes. This is Mr Pitt's peculiarity among the great English statesmen of the eighteenth century As a rule, the spirit of Sir Robert Walpole ruled over all these statesmen They respected his favourite maxim, *quieta non move*, to deal shrewdly and adroitly with what must be dealt with, to leave alone whatever might be left alone, to accumulate every possible resource against the inevitable difficulties of the present moment, and never to think or dream or treat of what was not inevitable,—these were then, as always, the justifiable aims of commonplace men They did *their* possible; they did all that they could with their strength and their faculties in their day and generation The philosophy of the time, with its definite problems and its unaspiring tendencies, encouraged them; it made them unalive to the higher possibilities they were forgetting, to the higher duties they were half-consciously, half-unconsciously passing over It was with reference to this oblivious neglect of the future, this short-sighted ab-

sorption in the present, that Dr. Arnold called this century the "misused trial-time of modern Europe." It is the distinctive characteristic of Pitt that, having a great opportunity, having power such as no parliamentary statesman has ever had, having in his mind a fresh stock of youthful thought such as no similar statesman has ever possessed—he applied *that* power steadily and perseveringly to embody that thought. To persons who think but slightly, this may seem only a very slight merit. The first remark of many a commonplace man would be, "If I had great power, I would carry out my own ideas." A modern Socrates, if there were such a person, would answer, "But, my good friend, what are your ideas?" When explained to an exact and scrutinizing questioner, still more when confronted with the awful facts—the inevitable necessities of the real world—these "ideas" would melt away; after a little while the commonplace person, who was at first so proud of them, would cease to believe that he ever entertained them; he would say, "Men of business do not indulge in those speculations." The characteristic merit of Pitt is, that in the midst of harassing details, in the midst of obvious cares, in the face of most keen, most able, and most stimulated opposition, he applied his whole power to the accomplishment of great but practicable schemes.

The marvel, or at any rate the merit, is greater. Pitt was by no means an excited visionary. He had by no means one of those minds upon which great ideas fasten as a fanaticism. There was among his contemporaries a great man, who was in the highest gifts of abstract genius, in the best acquisitions of political culture, far superior to him. But in the mind of Burke great ideas were a supernatural burden, a superincumbent inspiration. He saw a great truth, and he saw nothing else. At all times with the intense irritability of genius, in later years with the extreme one-sidedness of insanity, he was content, in season and out of season,

with the great visions which had been revealed to him, with the great lessons which he had to teach, and which he could but very rarely induce any one to hear. But Pitt's mind was an absolute contrast to this. He had an extreme discretion, tested at the most trying conjunctures. In 1784, when he had no power, when there was a hostile majority in the House of Commons, when he had no sure majority in the House of Lords, when the support of the King, which he undeniably had, was an undeniable difficulty—for he did not intend to be a second Lord North ; he did not intend to be a servitor of the Palace,—he would not have stooped to carry out measures which he disapproved of ; he would not have been willing to enunciate measures as to which he had not been consulted ;—at this very moment, with most of the constitutional powers against him, with the very greatest greatly against him, with no useful part of it truly for him—he never made a false step ; he guided the most feeble administration of modern times so ably and so dexterously that in a few months it became the strongest. A mind with so delicate a tact as this is entitled to some merit for adhering to distant principles. It is those who understand the present that feel the temptation of the present, it is those who comprehend the hour that feel the truly arduous, though upon paper it may seem the petty, difficulty of thinking beyond the hour. It is no merit in those who cannot have the present to attempt to act for posterity. There is nothing else left to them ; they have no other occupation open to them. But it is a great merit in those who can have what is plain, apparent, and immediate, to think of the unseen, unasking, impalpable future.

It is this singular discretion which is Mr. Pitt's peculiar merit, because he belongs to the class of statesmen who are most apt to be defective in that discretion. He was an oratorical statesman ; and an oratorical statesman means, *ex vi termini*, an excitable statesman. His art consists in the power of giving successfully in a more

than ordinary manner the true feelings and sentiments of ordinary men ; not their superficial notions, nor their coarser sentiments, for with these any inferior man may deal, but their most intimate nature, that which in their highest moments is most truly themselves. How is the exercise of this art to be reconciled with terrestrial discretion ? Is the preacher to come down from his pedestal ? is he who can deal worthily with great thoughts to be asked also to deal fittingly with small details ? is it possible that the same mind which can touch the hearts of all men can also be alive to the petty interests of itself ? is the microscopic power to be added to the telescopic power ? is the capacity for careful management to be added to the power of creating unbounded enthusiasm ? Yet this is the perpetual difficulty of parliamentary statesmen. A dry man can do the necessary business ; an excitable man can give to the popular House of Parliament the necessary excitement. Mr. Pitt was able, with surpassing ability and surpassing ease, to do both ; scarcely any one else has been so.

This great parliamentary position he owed to a combination of parliamentary abilities, of which only one or two can be, within our necessary limits, distinctly specified, but one or two of which are very prominent.

First, his singular oratorical power. He was, Lord Macaulay tells us, "at once the one man who could explain a Budget without notes, and who could speak that most unmeaningly evasive of human compositions, a Queen's Speech, off hand " He had the eloquence of business both in its expressive and its inexpressive forms, and he had likewise the eloquence of character ; that is, he had the singular power, which not half a dozen men in a generation possess, of imparting to a large audience the exact copy of the feelings, the exact impress of the determination, with which they are themselves possessed. On a matter of figures, " Pitt said so," was enough ; on a question of legislative improve-

ment, an apathetic Parliament caught some interest from his example ; in the deepest moments of national despair, an anxious nation could show some remains of their characteristic courage, from his bold audacity, and unwearied, inflexible, and augmenting determination.

No man could have achieved this without a sanguine temperament, and accordingly good observers pronounced Mr Pitt the most sanguine man they had ever known. In no stage of national despondency, in no epoch of national despair, was his capacity of hope, one of the important capacities for great men in anxious affairs, ever shaken. At the crisis of his early life, Lord Temple's resignation, which seemed the last possible addition to the coalition of difficulties under which he was labouring, is said to have deprived him of sleep ; but nothing else ever did so after his power attained its maturity, and while his body retained its strength.

Over the House of Commons, too, his anxious love of detail had an influence which will not surprise those who know how sensitive that critical assembly is to every sort of genuineness, and how keenly watchful it is for every kind of falsity. The labour bestowed on his reform of the Customs Acts, on his Indian measures, on his financial proposals from year to year, is matter of history ; no one can look with an instructed eye at these measures without instantly being conscious of it. In addition to his other great powers, Mr Pitt added the rare one of an intense capacity for work, in an age when that capacity was rarer than it is now, and in a Parliament where the element of dandies and idlers was far more dominant than it has since become.

Nor would this enumeration of Pitt's great parliamentary qualities be complete—it would want, perhaps, the most striking and obvious characteristic—if we omitted to mention Pitt's well-managed shyness and his surpassing pride.

In all descriptions of Pitt's appearance in the House

of Commons, a certain aloofness fills an odd space. He is a "thing apart," different somehow from other members. Fox was the exact opposite. He was a good fellow, he rolled into the House, fat, good-humoured, and popular. Pitt was spare, dignified, and reserved. When he entered the House, he walked to the place of the Premier, without looking to the right or to the left, and he sat at the same place. He was ready to discuss important business with all proper persons, upon all necessary occasions; but he was not ready to discuss business unnecessarily with any one, nor did he discuss anything but business with any save a very few intimate friends, with whom his reserve at once vanished, and his wit and humour at once expanded, and his genuine interest in all really great subjects was at once displayed. In a popular assembly this sort of reserve rightly manipulated is a power. It is analogous to the manner which the accomplished author of *Eothen* recommends in dealing with Orientals: "it excites terror and inspires respect." A recent book of memoirs illustrates it. During Addington's administration, a certain rather obscure "Mr. G." was made a privy councillor, and the question was raised in Pitt's presence as to the mode in which he could have obtained that honour. Some one said, "I suppose he was always talking to the Premier, and bothering him." Mr. Pitt quietly observed, "In my time I would much rather have made him a privy councillor *than have spoken to him*." It is easy to conceive the mental exhaustion which this well-managed reserve spared him, the number of trivial conversations which it economized, the number of imperfect ambitions which it quelled before they were uttered. An ordinary man could not of course make use of it. But Pitt at the earliest period imparted to the House of Commons the two most important convictions for a member in his position: he convinced them that he would not be the King's creature, and that he desired no pecuniary profit for himself. As he despised royal favour and despised real

money, the House of Commons thought he might well despise *them*

We have left ourselves no room to speak of Mr Pitt's policy at the time of the French Revolution. It would require an essay of considerable length to do it substantial justice. But we may observe, that the crisis which that Revolution presented to an English statesman was one rather for a great dictator than for a great administrator. The English people were at first in general pleased with the commencement of the French Revolution. "*Anglo-manie*," it seemed, had been prevalent on the Continent; the English Constitution, it was hoped, would be transplanted; the fundamental principles of the English Revolution it was, at any rate, hoped, would be imitated. The essay of Burke by its arguments, the progress of events by an evident experience, proved that such would not be the history. What was to come was uncertain. There was no precedent on the English file, the English people did not know what they ought to think; they were ready to submit to any one who would think for them. The only point upon which their opinion was decided was, that the French Revolution was very dangerous; that it had produced awful results in France; that it was no model for imitation for sober men in a sober country. They were ready to concede anything to a statesman who allowed this, who acted on this, who embodied this in appropriate action.

Mr. Pitt saw little further than the rest of the nation; what the French Revolution was he did not understand; what forces it would develop he did not foresee, what sort of opposition it would require he did not apprehend. He was, indeed, on one point much in advance of his contemporaries. The instinct of uncultivated persons is always towards an intemperate interference with anything of which they do not approve. A most worthy police-magistrate in our own time said, that "he intended to put down *suicide*." The English people, in

the very same spirit of uncultured benevolence, wished to "put down the French Revolution." They were irritated at its excess; they were alarmed at its example; they conceived that such impiety should be punished for the past and prohibited for the future. Mr. Pitt's natural instinct, however, was certainly in an entirely opposite direction. He was by inclination and by temperament opposed to all war; he was very humane, and all war is inhumane, he was a great financier, and all war is opposed to well-regulated finance. He postponed a French war as long as he could; he consented to it with reluctance, and continued it from necessity.

Of the great powers which the sudden excitement of democratic revolution will stimulate in a nation seemingly exhausted Mr. Pitt knew no more than those who were around him. Burke said that, as a military power, France was "blotted from the map of Europe"; and though Pitt, with characteristic discretion, did not advance any sentiment which would be so extreme, or any phrase which would adhere so fixedly to every one's memory, it is undeniable that he did not anticipate the martial power which the new France, as by magic, displayed; that he fancied she would be an effete country; that he fancied he was making war with certain scanty vestiges of the *ancien régime*, instead of contending against the renewed, excited, and intensified energies of a united people. He did not know that, for temporary purposes, a revolutionary government was the most powerful of all governments; for it does not care for the future, and has the entire legacy of the past. He forgot that it was possible, that from a brief period of tumultuous disorder there might issue a military despotism more compact, more disciplined, and more overpowering than any which had preceded it, or any which has followed it.

But, as we have said, the conclusion of a prolonged article is no place for discussing the precise nature of Mr. Pitt's anti-revolutionary policy. Undoubtedly, he

did not comprehend the Revolution in France ; as Lord Macaulay has explained, with his habitual power, he over-rated the danger of a revolution in this country ; he entirely over-estimated the power of the democratic assailants, and he entirely under-estimated the force of the conservative, maintaining, restraining, and, if need were, reactionary, influence. He saw his enemy ;—he did not see his allies. But it is not given to many men to conquer such difficulties ; it is not given to the greatest of administrators to apprehend entirely new phenomena. A highly imaginative statesman, a man of great moments and great visions, a greater Lord Chatham, might have done so, but the educated sense and equable dexterity of Mr. Pitt failed. All that he could do he did. He burnt the memory of his own name into the continental mind. After sixty years, the French people still half believe that it was the gold of Pitt which caused many of their misfortunes, after half a century it is still certain that it was Pitt's indomitable spirit and Pitt's hopeful temper which was the soul of every continental coalition, and the animating life of every anti-revolutionary movement. He showed most distinctly how potent is the influence of a commanding character just when he most exhibited the characteristic limitation of even the best administrative intellect.

## BOLINGBROKE AS A STATESMAN \*

(1863)

WHO now reads Bolingbroke? was asked sixty years ago. Who knows anything about him? we may ask now. Professed students of our history or of our literature may have special knowledge, but out of the general mass of educated men, how many could give an intelligible account of his career? How many could describe even vaguely his character as a statesman? Our grandfathers and their fathers quarrelled for two generations as to the Peace of Utrecht, but only an odd person here and there could now give an account of its provisions. The most cultivated lady would not mind asking, "The Peace of Utrecht! yes—what was that?" Whether Mr St. John was right to make that peace; whether Queen Anne was right to create him a peer for making it, whether the Whigs were right in impeaching him for making it—the mass of men have forgotten. So is history *unmade*. Even now, the dust of forgetfulness is falling over the Congress of Vienna and the Peace of Paris; we are forgetting the last great pacification as we have wholly forgotten the pacification before that; in another fifty years "Vienna" will be as "Utrecht," and Wellington no more than Marlborough.

\* *The Life of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Secretary of State in the Reign of Queen Anne* By Thomas Macknight, author of the *History of the Life and Times of Edmund Burke*

In the meantime, however, Mr. Macknight has done well to collect for those who wish to know them the principal events of Bolingbroke's career. There was no tolerable outline of them before, and in some respects this is a good one. Mr. Macknight's style is clear, though often ponderous; his remarks are sensible, and he has the great merit of not being imposed on by great names and traditional reputations. The defect of the book is, that he takes too literary a view of politics and politicians; that he has not looked closely and for himself at real political life, that he therefore misses the guiding traits which show what in Queen Anne's time was so like our present politics, and what so wholly unlike. We shall venture in the course of this article to supply some general outline of the controversies that were to be then decided, and of the political forces which decided them; for unless these are distinctly imagined, a reader of the present day cannot comprehend why such a man as Bolingbroke was at one moment the most conspicuous and influential of English statesmen, and then for years an exile and a wanderer.

We must own, however, that it is not the intrinsic interest even of events once so very important as the war of the Grand Alliance and the Peace of Utrecht which tempts us to write this article. It is the interest of Bolingbroke's own character. He tried a great experiment. There lurks about the fancies of many men and women an imaginary conception of an ideal statesman, resembling the character of which Alcibiades has been the recognized type for centuries. There is a sort of intellectual luxury in the idea which fascinates the human mind. We like to fancy a young man, in the first vigour of body and in the first vigour of mind, who is full of bounding enjoyment, who is fond of irregular luxury, who is the favourite of society, who excels all rivals at masculine feats, who gains the love of women by a magic attraction; but who is also a

powerful statesman, who regulates great events, who settles great measures, who guides a great nation. We seem to outstep the *mœnia mundi*, the recognized limits of human nature, when we conceive a man in the pride of youth to have dominion over the pursuits of age, to rule both the light things of women and the grave things of men. Human imagination so much loves to surpass human power, that we shall never be able to extirpate the conception. But we may examine the approximations to it in life. We see in Bolingbroke's case that a life of brilliant licence is really compatible with a life of brilliant statesmanship ; that licence itself may even be thought to quicken the imagination for oratorical efforts ; that an intellect similarly aroused may, at exciting conjunctures, perceive possibilities which are hidden from duller men ; that the favourite of society will be able to use his companionship with men and his power over women so as much to aid his strokes of policy ; but, on the other hand, that these secondary aids and occasional advantages are purchased by the total sacrifice of a primary necessity, that a life of great excitement is incompatible with the calm circumspection and the sound estimate of probability essential to great affairs ; that though the excited hero may perceive distant things which others overlook, he will overlook near things that others see ; that though he may be stimulated to great speeches which others could not make, he will also be irritated to petty speeches which others would not ; that he will attract enmities, but not confidence, that he will not observe how few and plain are the alternatives of common business, and how little even genius can enlarge them, that his prosperity will be a wild dream of unattainable possibilities, and his adversity a long regret that those possibilities have departed. At any rate, such was Bolingbroke's career. We have better evidence about him than about any similar statesman, for the events in which he was concerned were large, and he has given

us a narrative of them from his own hand. A summary retrospect of his career will not be worthless, if it show what sudden brilliancy and what incurable ruin such a life as his, with such a genius as his, was calculated to ensure.

Bolingbroke's father was a type of his generation. He was a rake of the Restoration. Charles II is the only king of England who has had both the social qualities which fitted him to be the head of society, and the immoral qualities which fitted him to corrupt society. His easy talk, his good anecdotes, his happy manners, his conversancy with various life, made Whitehall the "best club" of that time. What sort of life he encouraged men to lead there we all know. Bolingbroke's father learned of him all the evil which he could learn. It was not singular that he committed excesses of dissipation, but it was rather singular that he committed what was thought to be a murder. He stabbed a man in a drunken broil, and, if Burnet can be trusted, only escaped from the gallows by a great bribe. He dawdled on at the coffee-houses far into George II's time, a monument of extinct profligacy, and a spectacle and a wonder to a graver generation.

Bolingbroke's mother was a daughter of the Earl of Warwick; but she died early, and his father married again, so that we hear very little about her. If the silence of his biographers may be trusted as evidence, she exercised but little influence upon his infancy or upon his life.

The most influential preceptors of Bolingbroke's boyhood were his grandfather and grandmother, who also were not unusual characters in their generation. The former was a serious and moderate Royalist, the latter was a serious but moderate Puritan. Bolingbroke's father apparently did not much like keeping house: it must have interfered with his pleasures, and marred the life of coffee-houses. The whole direction of Bolingbroke's mind was given to his grave grandfather and

grandmother. In after-times, when he was a prominent Tory and a professed High-Churchman, satirists used to say that he was brought up among "Dissenters" And it is probable that his grandmother, who was the daughter of the celebrated Oliver St. John, the great parliamentary lawyer and chief justice, was far from being in opinion what a high Anglican divine would term a "Church-woman." Bolingbroke himself used to relate terrible stories of having been compelled to read the sermons of Puritan divines But, as far as our slight information goes, he did not suffer more than in any moderately "serious" family of our own time. All serious families were then thought to have a little taint of Dissent, and Bolingbroke was probably very sensitive to the partial dullness of a semi-puritanical religion.

At any rate, we have no doubt it was said (and that his elder relatives much grieved at it) that "the boy was gone wrong, like his father." When he came out into the world he astonished his associates by his licence. He had been at Eton and Oxford, but he had not learned, what is often learned there, a decorum in profligacy. To what precise enormities his licence extended is immaterial, and cannot now be known. Goldsmith had talked to an old gentleman who related that Bolingbroke and his companions, in a drunken frolic, ran "naked through the park" But this is hardly credible; and probably Goldsmith's informant was one of the many old people who believe that the more wonderful the stories they tell, the more wonderful they themselves become. But at any rate his outrages attracted censure. He did not, like his father, belong to his generation. The age of King William tolerated much that we tolerate no longer, but it was not like the first years of Charles II. There was no longer a head-long recoil from Puritan strictness, and the Crown was on the side of at least apparent morality. As is usual in England, grave decorum and obvious morals had a substantial influence, and against these Bolingbroke offended.

He wrote poetry too, and the sort of poetry can only be appreciated by reading Locke's celebrated warning against that art, and the connections which it occasions. Bolingbroke's verses are addressed to a Clara A, an orange-girl, who pretended to sell that fruit near the Court of Requests, but who really had other objects. She was a lady of what may be called mutable connections; and the object of Bolingbroke's verses is to induce her to give them up and adhere to him only. He says

“ No, Clara, no, that person and that mind  
 Were formed by Nature, and by Heaven designed  
 For nobler ends. to these return, though late,  
 Return to these, and so avert thy fate  
 Think, Clara, think, nor will that thought be vain;  
 Thy slave, thy Harry, doomed to drag his chain  
 Of love ill-treated and abused, that he  
 From more inglorious chains might rescue thee.  
 Thy drooping health restored by his fond care,  
 Once more thy beauty its full lustre wear;  
 Moved by his love, by his example taught,  
 Soon shall thy soul, once more with virtue fraught,  
 With kind and generous truth thy bosom warm,  
 And thy fair mind, like thy fair person, charm.  
 To virtue thus and to thyself restored,  
 By all admired, by one alone adored,  
 Be to thy Harry ever kind and true,  
 And live for him who more than dies for you.”

One would like to know what the orange-girl thought of all this; but it would seem he was lavish of money as well as of verses.

At twenty-two he married. We do not know much about his money matters, and, as his father and grandfather were both alive, his means could not have been at all large, especially as his expenses had been great. But his wife had certainly a considerable fortune. She was descended from a clothier called Jack of Newbury, who had made a fortune several generations before, and

was one of the co-heiresses of Sir Henry Winchescomb, who had large property. What sort of person she was does not very clearly appear. But it does appear that the match was an unhappy one. He said she had a bad temper, with what truth we cannot ascertain now ; and she said he was a bad husband, which was unquestionably true. He had been a rake before marriage, and did not cease afterwards. He could drink more wine than any one in London, and continued that habit too. A kind of connection was kept up between them for many years, but it was a dubious and unhappy connection. We may suppose, however, that when he was a great statesman she derived some glory, if little happiness, from him ; and he certainly received a large income from her property during very many years.

At the age of twenty-eight Bolingbroke entered the House of Commons. Before that time he had done nothing to prove himself a man of great ability. At school and college he had done well, and had laid up perhaps a greater store of classical knowledge than those around him knew of. When abroad for a year or so, he had learned to speak French unusually well and unusually easily. But since he had been of age and in the world, his vices had been great, and he had not done much to compensate for them. Probably his boon companions considered him very clever ; but then sober men rated very low the judgment of those companions. His skill in writing poetry had not been greater than most people's, and his choice of subjects had been worse. Until now he had had no opportunity of showing great talents, and much opportunity of showing considerable vices.

In the House of Commons it was otherwise. His handsome person, long descent, and aristocratic mien set off a very remarkable eloquence, which seems to have been very ready even at the first. Years afterwards he was the model to whom Lord Chesterfield pointed in all the arts of manner and expression.

“Lord Bolingbroke,” he tells us, “without the least trouble, talked all day long full as elegantly as he wrote. He adorned whatever subject he either spoke or wrote upon by the most splendid eloquence, not a studied and laboured eloquence, but by such a flowing happiness of diction which (from care perhaps at first) was become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would have borne the press without the least correction either as to method or style.” “He had the most elegant politeness and good-breeding which ever any courtier or man of the world was blessed with”

Nor did he neglect matter in the pursuit of manner. In later life he wrote some characters of the two great orators of antiquity, which showed how acutely he had studied them. He turned aside from the commonplace topics, from their language and their manner, to comment on their acquaintance with all the topics of their time, and on the practical style in which they discuss practical questions. No one can read those delineations without perceiving that the writer is speaking of an art which he has himself practised. Those who knew how little studious Bolingbroke’s habits were, appear to have been surprised at the information he displayed. But his excitable life rather promoted than forbade brief crises of keen study. His parts were quick, his language vague, though imposing, and he could always talk very happily on subjects of which he only knew a very little

The time was favourable to a great orator. The Tory party was exactly in the state in which it has been in our own time. It had many votes and no tongue. Our county system tends to prevent our county magnates from ruling England. Stringent limitations are laid down which narrow the electoral choice, and tend to exclude available talent. It is wise and natural that the landed interest should choose to be represented by landed gentlemen; a community of nature between it and its representatives is desirable and inevitable. But

our counties are more exacting than this: each county requires that the member shall have land within the county, and as in each the number of candidates thus limited is but small, unsuitable ones must be chosen. We have left off expecting eloquence from a county member. Grave files of speechless men have always represented the land of England. In Queen Anne's time too, as in our own time, a lingering prejudice haunted rural minds, and inclined them to prefer stupid magnates who shared it to clever ones who were emancipated from it. Bolingbroke, like Mr. Disraeli, found the Tory party in a state of dumb power, like him, too, became its spokesman and obtained its power.

Bolingbroke came into Parliament just at the end of King William's reign, and was at once forced into contact with the two subjects which were to occupy throughout his active life. The reign of King William, which was about to end, and that of Queen Anne, which was just about to begin, were filled by two of the greatest topics which can occupy a period. The first of these was a question of dynasty. Our revolution had not called the "minimum of a revolution," and "the death of a political philosopher so it is. It altered not only in the substance of our institutions and in our government. But to common people, when it happened, it did not seem great. Even now the detail of our hereditary system is not much understood by the great part of the public, and they care for it but little, except indeed for the Queen, and the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, mainly interest them. The second subject embodies to them constitution, government, and idea known to rural hamlets and country towns. But our revolution changed the sovereign. The King, another name and idea were substituted. The Jacobites, went about saying that the King whom God had made, and

another king whom Parliament had made. At this moment, though the dogma of hereditary right has been confuted for ages, though it has been laughed at for ages, though parliaments have condemned it, though divines have been impeached for preaching it, though it is a misdemeanour to maintain it, the tenet still lives in ordinary minds. In Somersetshire and half the quiet counties the inhabitants would say that Queen Victoria ruled by the right of birth and the grace of God, and not by virtue of an Act of Parliament. They still think that she has a divine right to the crown, and not a right by statute only. If the old creed of the Jacobites is still so powerful, what must have been its force in Queen Anne's time? That generation had seen the change from "God's king" to "man's king," and very many of them did not like it. Shrewd men said that England was prosperous under the revolutionary government; common sense said that an ill-born king who governed well was better than a well-born king who governed ill; Whigs said that England was free after the revolution, and would have been enslaved but for the revolution; yet on the simple superstition of many natural minds the force of these arguments was lost. They admitted the advantage of liberty and of prosperity, but they would not renounce "the Lord's anointed for a mess of pottage." Happily this political feeling was counteracted by a religious feeling. The hatred to Popery supported the successful and rebellious king, who was a Protestant, against the unsuccessful and legitimate king, who was a Papist. But the strength so obtained was precarious; it might cease at any time. The "Pretender" might change his religion, and reports were continually circulated that he had done so, or was to do so. The existing dynasty could not be strong when its best support in the most natural minds was the continued profession of one religion by a person who had very strong motives to profess another.

The question of dynasty was the prominent question

in Bolingbroke's age ; such a question must always be the first where it exists. The question, Who shall be king ? can never be secondary. But it had a formidable rival. All through King William's and all through Queen Anne's time the English mind was occupied with almost the only question which could compete with the question who should be King of England—the question whether there ought or ought not to be war with France. Frequent battles, daily hopes of battles, daily arguments whether there should be battles or not, kept even the greatest domestic question out of our thoughts.

On both these subjects Bolingbroke was compelled to critical action in his first Parliament. The question of dynasty was in a very odd and very English state of complexity. It might have been thought to be a question of bare alternatives, and to have been susceptible of no compromise. Either Parliament had no power to choose a sovereign upon grounds of expediency, or it might choose any sovereign who was expedient. If King James might be expelled at all, it could only be because he was a bad king, and in order to put in a better king. On principle, Parliament was either powerless or omnipotent. But this clear decisive logic has never suited Englishmen. As for King William, indeed, no one could say he was any sort of king except a parliamentary king, but his heir was the Princess Anne.

“ Surely, it was thought, she and her children had *some* divine right—a little, if not much ? She had no right by birth certainly, for her father and her brother came before her ; she was not the nearest heir, but she was the nearest Protestant heir, she was not the eldest son of the last king, but she was his eldest daughter that was living.” These facts do not seem to be very material to us now, but at the time they were critically material. Half the population probably believed that it would be right—not merely expedient, but right in some high mystic sense—to obey Anne and her children. They were not only ready, but were anxious, to take

her for the root of a new dynasty. But the Fates seemed capriciously determined to defeat their wishes. Anne had thirteen children, and all the thirteen died. At the death of the Duke of Gloucester, who was the last of them, some further settlement was necessary, and what it should be was decided in Bolingbroke's first Parliament.

On this subject he ought to have been a Whig of the Whigs. His writings are full of such expressions as the "chimera of prerogative"; "the slavish principles of passive obedience and non-resistance which had skulked" in old books till the reign of James I. And he has stated the Whig conception of the revolution as well as any one, if not better. "If," he says, "a divine, indefeasible, hereditary right to govern a community be once acknowledged, a right independent of the community, and which vests in every successive prince immediately on the death of his predecessor, and previously to any engagement taken on his part towards the people, if the people once acknowledge themselves bound to such princes by the ties of passive obedience and non-resistance, by an allegiance unconditional, and not reciprocal to protection; if a kind of oral law, or mysterious cabbala, which pharisees of the black gown and the long robe are always at hand to report and interpret as a prince desires, be once added, like a supplemental code, to the known laws of the land: then, I say, such princes have the power, if not the right, given them of commencing tyrants; and princes who have the power are prone to think that they have the right. Such was the state of king and people before the revolution." He could have no horror of Popery, for he regarded all the historical forms of Christianity with an impartial scepticism; he probably thought it more gentlemanly than Presbyterianism, and not more absurd than Anglicanism. He ought to have been ready to obey whatever king was most eligible upon grounds of rational expediency.

The proposal of the Whigs, too, was as moderate as it was possible for it to be. As public opinion required, they selected the next Protestant heir. They passed over all the children of James II., who were Catholics, the descendants of Henrietta, daughter of Charles I., who were Catholics, the elder descendants of Elizabeth, the daughter of James I., who were Catholics, and found the Princess Sophia, a younger daughter of Elizabeth, who was a very clever and accomplished lady, and who, if she had any religion, was a Protestant. All the reasonable and prudent part of the nation was in favour of this scheme. The Whigs were of course in favour of it, for it was their scheme. Harley, at the head of the moderate Tories, strenuously supported it. But it was not popular with the unthinking masses, and perhaps could not be. Half or more than half the believers in divine right were ready, as we have explained, to pay obedience to Queen Anne as a sort of consecrated queen; she was at any rate a princess born of a real king and queen in real England; we had always been used to her. But a search in Germany for the sort of Protestants we were likely to find there was not pleasant to the mass of Englishmen, and of the strong-minded old lady who had been discovered nothing whatever was commonly known. After all, too, there was no certainty that in future we should be obeying the nearest Protestant heir. We were passing over several Catholic families, and if hereafter any one of them were to become a Protestant—according to *principle*, or what was called such, we must obey him as our king.

Though the choice of the Hanoverian family as heirs to the Crown was prudent, wise, and statesmanlike, there was no strong popular sentiment on which it was firmly based, and no neat popular phrase by which it could in argument be precisely supported. In a word, unthinking people of the common sort did not much like the House of Hanover, and a mass of ill-defined prejudice accumulated against it. Of this prejudice

Bolingbroke made himself the organ. He did not share it or try to share it. But, finding a large and speechless party, he thought he could become at once politically important by saying for them that which they could not say for themselves. The scheme was successful. He became at once important in Parliament, because he was the eloquent spokesman of many inaudible persons.

In foreign policy, Bolingbroke's tactics were the same. The aggression of France was the natural terror of lovers of liberty at that time. Louis XIV was as ready to use his power without scruple against free nations as Napoleon; and his power, though not equal to that of Napoleon at his zenith, was greater than that of Napoleon at most times, and than that of any other French sovereign at any time. The King of Spain, too, was about to die; it was to be feared that he would name as his heir Philip, the grandson of Louis, and few doubted but that Louis, notwithstanding an express renunciation of all such claims by treaty, would permit his grandson to accept the throne. Nor was the Spain of 1700 merely the Spain of our time. She was much more powerful. She possessed the "California" of that age, a vast empire in South America, producing gold and silver, which were then thought to be magically potent substances, for the whole civilized world. She possessed, too, Sicily, and Naples, and Milan, and Belgium; and the popular imagination, which ever clings to decaying grandeur, still believed that Spain itself was a nation of great power—was still able, as in former generations, to obtain ascendancy in Europe. The *terror*, for such it was, of liberal politicians then was, that that vast inheritance would practically fall into the dominion of Louis XIV.—that it would belong to a Bourbon prince brought up under his eye, and slavishly in subjection to him. The Whigs contended that this calamity should be prevented, if possible, by an amicable partition of Spain, by giving France as little as possible,

and that little in places as little important as possible. If no such amicable arrangement were possible, they said, it must be prevented by a war. The Tories did not like war, did not like partition treaties. They did not love France, but they were not anxious to oppose France. In that age we were uneducated in foreign policy, the mass of men had no distinct conception of continental transactions, nor was reason reinforced very distinctly by antipathy. We hated France, it is true, but we hated Holland also, she was our rival in commerce, and our enemy—sometimes our successful enemy—in naval warfare; and to vanquish the French by the aid of the Dutch did not greatly gratify our animosity. The anti-revolutionary part of the nation did not care for liberty, for that was the code of the Whigs and the basis of the revolution. In a word, though there was little distinct or rational opinion opposed to a war with France, there was much indistinct and crude prejudice. Of this too Bolingbroke became the organ.

In the later part of his life he did not attempt to defend his first notion of foreign policy. He says: "I have sometimes considered, in reflecting on these passages, what I should have done if I had sat in Parliament at that time; and have been forced to own myself that I should have voted for disbanding the army then, as I voted in the following Parliament for censuring the partition treaties. I am forced to own this, because I remember how imperfect my notions were of the situation of Europe in that extraordinary crisis, and how much I saw the true interest of my own country in a half light. But, my lords, I own it with some shame, because in truth nothing could be more absurd than the conduct we held. What! because we had not reduced the power of France by the war, nor excluded the house of Bourbon from the Spanish succession, nor compounded with her upon it by the peace; and because the house of Austria had not helped her-

self, nor put it into our power to help her with more advantage and better prospect of success—were we to leave that whole succession open to the invasions of France, and to suffer even the contingency to subsist of seeing those monarchies united ? What ! because it was become extravagant, after the trials so lately made, to think ourselves any longer engaged by treaty, or obliged by good policy, to put the house of Austria in possession of the whole Spanish monarchy, and to defend her in this possession by force of arms, were we to leave the whole at the mercy of France ? If we were not to do so, if we were not to do one of the three things that I said above remained to be done, and if the Emperor put it out of our power to do another of them with advantage ; were we to put it still more out of our power, and to wait unarmed for the death of the King of Spain ? In fine, if we had not the prospect of disputing with France, so successfully as we might have had it, the Spanish succession whenever it should be open ; were we not only to show by disarming, that we would not dispute it at all, but to censure likewise the second of the three things mentioned above, and which King William put in practice, the compounding with France, to prevent if possible a war, in which we were averse to engage ? ” The truth doubtless is, that Bolingbroke never believed, or much believed, these absurdities. As he was the spokesman of the Tories, he advocated, and was compelled to advocate, the vague notions which they not unnaturally held, and these were prejudices imbibed by habit, not opinions elaborated by effort.

That his mode of advocacy was very skilful we may easily believe His speeches have perished, but their merit may be conjectured He is in his writings a great master of *specious* statement Accessory arguments and subordinate facts seem of themselves to fall precisely where they should fall He has the knack of never *making* a case ; the case always seems made for him ;

he seems to be giving it its most suitable expression, but to be doing no more. In the greater part of his writings which were written late in life, except when he defends the Peace of Utrecht, he had no tenet to defend in which he took a keen interest. He had not the habits suitable to abstract thought, nor the genius for it. He is apt, therefore, to embody meagre thoughts in excellent words, to develop long arguments from sparse facts. He had a pleasure in writing, and he had little to say. But when his passions were eager, when his interest was vivid, when the very dissipation of his life quickened his excitability, when the topic of discussion was critically important to himself—we may well believe his advocacy to have been effective. He could ever say what he pleased, and in early life he had much to say which he well knew and for which he much cared.

A blunder of Louis' for several years simplified English politics. At the death of James II he acknowledged his son, the "Pretender," as King of England; and he could have done him no greater harm. The English people were not very sure of abstract rights, but they were very sure of practical applications. Whether they had a right to choose a king for themselves might be doubtful, but it was clear that the King of France had no such right. Whoever might be our king, it certainly should not be his *protégé*. War with France became popular. The King of Spain was dead; as was feared, he had left the vast inheritance of Spain to Louis' grandson, and war with France became expedient. It was declared accordingly.

The death of William simplified politics still further. Bolingbroke himself may explain this. "The alliances," he tells us, "were concluded, the quotas were settled, and the season for taking the field approached, when King William died. The event could not fail to occasion some consternation on one side, and to give some hopes on the other, for, notwithstanding the ill success with which he made war generally, he was looked upon as

the sole centre of union that could keep together the great confederacy then forming, and how much the French feared from his life had appeared a few years before, in the extravagant and indecent joy they expressed on a false report of his death. A short time showed how vain the fears of some, and the hopes of others, were. By his death, the Duke of Marlborough was raised to the head of the army, and indeed of the confederacy; where he, a new, a private man, a subject, acquired by merit and by management a more deciding influence than high birth, confirmed authority, and even the crown of Great Britain, had given to King William. Not only all the parts of that vast machine, the grand alliance, were kept more compact and entire, but a more rapid and vigorous motion was given to the whole; and, instead of languishing or disastrous campaigns, we saw every scene of the war full of action. All those wherein he appeared, and many of those wherein he was not then an actor—but abettor, however, of their action—were crowned with the most triumphant success. I take with pleasure this opportunity of doing justice to that great man, whose faults I knew, whose virtues I admired, and whose memory, as the greatest general and as the greatest minister that our country or perhaps any other has produced, I honour." The war absorbed England for several years. For the first time in our history we were the centre of a great confederacy, and our general was the victorious leader, in great battles, of miscellaneous armies. It was then that we first acquired that great name as a military people, which, notwithstanding our small numbers and small armies, we have since supported, and that a great foresight, a minute diligence, and a splendid courage in modern war, were first combined in an Englishman. Marlborough was in one respect more fortunate than Wellington. Napoleon must always be the first military figure of his generation; but throughout the last century the whole Continent talked of the wars of

Marlborough, for he was the most fascinating as well as the most successful general in them

During the first eight years of Marlborough's wars, the English nation was nearly united. A war always unites a people; the objector to it becomes a kind of traitor to his country; he seems to be a favourer of the enemy, even though he is not. Not only Harley, a moderate Tory, but Bolingbroke, an extreme Tory, took office in the war ministry. It is true there was no dereliction of party principle in their doing so, either as such principle was then understood, or as it is understood now. Marlborough himself had never been a Whig; and Godolphin, the head of the Treasury and first minister for the home administration, had ever been a Tory. But though plain party ties might not be violated by a Tory support of Marlborough's wars, a sort of sentiment was violated. The war was a Whig war, and could only be carried on by Whig support. Ere long Godolphin and Marlborough were compelled to give the Whigs a large share in the actual administration. The ministry became a composite one. Though many Tories remained in it, yet its essence and its spirit were Whig. It was carrying on the sort of war which one party in the State had extolled for years, and which the antagonist party had deprecated for years. It has been called after its cause. It has been called the Whig Ministry of Godolphin and Marlborough, the two leading Tories of the age.

The place which Bolingbroke accepted was that of Secretary at War, which brought him into contact with the best business of the time, with that sort of business upon which most depended. As far as appears, he did it well, and the official experience he then acquired must have been inestimable to him afterwards. There is much which no statesman can in truth know, and much more which he will not be thought to know, unless he has gone through a certain necessary official education, and learned to use certain conventional official

expressions. This sort of knowledge Bolingbroke now acquired. But it was not by success or failure in office desk-work that the movements of his life were to be regulated.

The Whigs naturally did not quite like the subordinate position which they occupied in a ministry which was carrying out a Whig policy. They thought it hard that Tories should be paid for Whig measures, that the glory of delivering Europe should be given, not to Whigs, who had striven to deliver her, but to Tories, who would have liked not to deliver her. Their support was necessary to Godolphin and to Marlborough, and they gradually raised the price of that support. Early in 1708 most of the remaining Tories were turned out, and Bolingbroke among them. Except the two chiefs, Godolphin and Marlborough, the ministry became a Whig ministry almost exclusively.

That Bolingbroke did not like to be turned out is probable, but he professed to like it. He sought refuge in retirement; he professed to study philosophy, and passed much of his time in the country, and in reading. Such professions from a man of great ambition and lax life were ridiculed. A friend suggested that he should write this motto over his favourite rural retreat:

“ From business and the noisy world retired,  
Nor vexed by love, nor by ambition fired,  
Gently I wait the call of Charon’s boat,  
Still drinking like a fish, and amorous like a goat ” \*

And Swift says he could hardly bear the jest, for he was a man rather sensitive to ridicule. And though satirists might laugh at his meditations and his studies, and though he permitted them to derange very little his pleasure or his vices, there is no doubt that they were real, and that they were valuable. Doubtless, too, though he was only twenty-eight, he was a little tired

\* Swift’s *Journal to Stella*

of subordinate office. His disposition was very impatient, and his sense of personal dignity very considerable. Even so patient a pattern of routine diligence as Sir Robert Peel rejoiced as a young man to be for a year or so out of office. His mind, he acknowledged, widened, and his capacity to think for himself improved. If Peel, who was made to toil in the furrow, felt this, Bolingbroke, who was made to exult in the desert, might well feel it. During three years he really read much and thought much.

But a great change was at hand. The war with France was still successful and still popular, but it might be doubted if it was still necessary. We had weakened France so much, that it might be questionable if she wanted weakening more. Our victories had destroyed her prestige, and the results of these victories had weakened her vigour. Sensible men began to inquire what was to be the time, what the occasion, and what the terms of peace.

The ministry, indeed, appeared to be firm, but it was firm in appearance only. The conditions of ministerial continuance differed in that age in a most material respect from the present conditions. Now the House of Commons, in almost all cases, prescribes imperatively not only what measures shall be taken, but what men shall take them. It chooses both policy and ministers. In Queen Anne's time Parliament had acquired an almost complete ascendancy in policy, it could fix precisely whether there should be war or no war, peace or no peace, it had acquired a perfect control upon legislation, and a nearly perfect control upon internal administration. But it had no choice, or but little, in the selection of persons. *What* was to be done Parliament settled, but *who* was to do it the Queen settled.

Queen Anne had done so at her accession. Though she was engaged in a Whig war, she removed the Whig ministers whom she found in office. She appointed as

supreme generalissimo over the war abroad, and real prime minister over matters of state at home, the Duke of Marlborough, not because of his discretion or his acquaintance with business, or his military genius, but because his wife was her early friend and her special favourite. As the Duke of Wellington justly observed, the Duke of Marlborough *was* the English Government: he was not liable to be thwarted, or misconstrued, or neglected; his operations in Flanders were never cramped by the home Government, as the operations of the Duke of Wellington in Spain were cramped. He appointed the lord high treasurer Godolphin; he placed the Treasury, then even more than now the supreme internal office, in Godolphin's hands, because he was connected with him by domestic ties, because they had long acted together, because he had great confidence in his financial ability. The Duke of Marlborough was not only great because of his wife, but absolutely because of his wife.

By a kind of compensation the source of his power was the cause also of his downfall. The Queen and the duchess quarrelled, as was natural. The duchess was virulent and obtrusive, and the Queen was sensitive and sullen. The Queen had a strong sense of personal dignity, which the duchess used to outrage. The duchess, who was clever, thought the Queen a fool, and scarcely forbore to look and say so. From early habit the friendship lasted much longer than could have been thought likely, but it could not last for ever. As it was breaking up, a small force produced a large effect. The Queen, Swift says, had not a "stock of amity" for more than one person at a time: she commonly cared but little for anybody save one, but she required one. The duchess had placed at court a poor relative of her own, a Miss Hill, whom both she and the Queen regarded as a petty dependent, a *real* maid, who would be useful and lie on the floor when peeresses and young ladies of quality were useless and went to bed. As she was

humble and artful, she acquired influence: she was never in the way and never out of the way. She was always pleasant to the Queen, and the duchess was commonly unpleasant. The consequence was certain. The abject new favourite soon supplanted the querulous old favourite.

A very curious man took advantage of this. Wits and satirists have been fond of describing Robert Harley, but perhaps they have not described him very well. They have made a heap of incongruities of him. They have told us that, being bred a Puritan, and retaining till his death much of the Puritan phraseology, he yet became the favourite leader of High Churchmen and Tories; that being a muddle-headed dawdler, he gained a great reputation for the transaction of business; that having an incapacity for intelligible speech, he became an influential orator in Parliament; that being a puzzle-headed man, of less than average ability, and less than average activity, he long ruled a great party, for years ruled the court, and was at last Prime Minister of England.

It is very natural that brilliant and vehement men should deprecate Harley, for he had nothing which they possess, but had everything which they commonly do not possess. He was by nature a moderate man. In that age they called such a man a trimmer, but they called him ill. Such a man does not consciously shift or purposely trim his course. He firmly believes that he is substantially consistent. "I do not wish in this House," he would say in our age, "to be a party to any extreme course. Mr. Gladstone brings forward a great many things which I cannot understand; I assure you he does. There is more in that bill of his about tobacco than he thinks; I am confident there is. Money is a serious thing, a *very* serious thing. And I am sorry to say Mr. Disraeli commits the party very much. He avows sentiments which are injudicious. I cannot go along with him, nor can Sir John. He was not taught

the Catechism ; I know he was not There is a want in him of sound and sober religion—and Sir John agrees with me—which would keep him from distressing the clergy, who are very important Great orators are very well ; but, as I said, how is the revenue ? And the point is, not to be led away and to be moderate, and not to go to an extreme As soon as it seems *very* clear, then I begin to doubt I have been many years in Parliament, and *that* is my experience.” We may laugh at such speeches, but there have been plenty of them in every English Parliament A great English divine has been described as always leaving out the principle upon which his arguments rested , even if it was stated to him, he regarded it as far-fetched and extravagant Any politician who has this temper of mind will always have many followers ; and he may be nearly sure that all great measures will be passed more nearly as he wishes them to be passed than as great orators wish Harley had this temper, and he enjoyed its results. He always had a certain influence over moderate Whigs when he was a Tory, and over moderate Tories when he was a Whig. Nine-tenths of mankind are more afraid of violence than of anything else , and inconsistent moderation is always popular, because of all qualities it is most opposite to violence—most likely to preserve the present safe existence

Harley’s moderation, which was influential because it was unaffected, was assisted by two powers which brilliant people despise, because in general they do not share them Harley excelled in the forms of business There is distinct evidence that official persons preferred his management of the Treasury to that of Lord Godolphin, who preceded him, or Sir R Walpole, who succeeded him In real judgment and substantial knowledge of affairs there was doubtless no comparison. Godolphin was the best financier of his generation, and Walpole was the best not only of his own but of many which came after him But the ultimate issue of busi-

ness is not the part of it which most impresses the officials of a department. They understand how business is conducted better than what comes of it. The statesman who gives them no trouble—who coincides with that which they recommend—who thinks of the things which they think of, is more satisfactory to his mere subordinates than a real ruler, who has plans which others do not share, and whose mind is occupied by large considerations, which only a few can appreciate, and only experience can test. In his own time, both with the Tory party and with moderate Whigs, Harley's reputation as a man of business was a means of influence which, on the same scene and in our own day, could hardly be surpassed.

But it was surpassed in his own day. In personal questions, as we have explained, the Parliament in Queen Anne's time was only a subordinate power, the court was the principal and the determining power. Now the faculty of business is but secondary in all courts, the faculty of intrigue is the main source of real influence. To be able to manage men, to know with whom to be silent, to know with whom to say how much, to be able to drop casual observations, to have a sense of that which others mean, though they do not say—to be aware what Lady A. is in secret planning, though she says the very opposite—to know that Lord B. has no influence, though he seems most potent—to know that little C. is a wire-puller, and can get you anything, though he looks mean and though no one knows, in a word, to understand, to feel, to be unable to help feeling, the *by-play* of life, is the principal necessity for success in courts. It is the instinct of management which is not to be shown even in conversation, far less in writing or speculation, but yet which rules all small societies. Harley possessed it, and the obscure but potent talents of business also; and we need seek no farther explanation why he was one of the most successful men in his own time.

Harley was some sort of relative to Miss Hill (or Mrs. Masham, for she married), the rising favourite of Queen Anne's time. He was the favourite leader of all moderate Tories ; and, on the whole, though not without grumblings from extreme men, the most important leader of the Tory party. He had been turned out when Bolingbroke was turned out, and he wished to return. The fly was brought to the spider Mrs. Masham, the new favourite, asked Harley what counsel she should give the Queen. He said, " Turn out the Whigs , " and meant " Bring *me* in "

The Queen was inert, for that was her nature , and the evident popularity and the glorious success of the Whig war naturally staggered her But the Whigs made an error The High-Church and semi-High-Church party had enormous power in the nation , they had always advocated non-resistance before the revolution, and though they had taken the oaths to King William's Government, they did not like to think that they were supporting a government which was conspicuously rebellious, which began in resistance to legitimate authority. Of course, the fact was so King William invaded England with Dutch troops, and was joined by English rebels ; but the divine right of princes, and the duty of unconditional obedience, retained much influence over most of the clergy and over many of the laity If the Whigs had been wise, they would have offended this powerful sentiment as little as possible High Churchmen were certainly powerful, but were necessarily inert ; they had no distinct course to recommend , they *would* have done much, but they *could* do nothing. They had assented to the existing Government, and though their assent might be unwilling and ungracious, the existing Government should have let them alone The Whigs adopted the reverse course A foolish parson expressed with unusual folly the sentiments of the great majority of his order The Commons, at the instigation of the Whigs, actually impeached him

at the bar of the Lords. In their folly they used against a pious and innocuous fool the extreme remedy which the constitution provides for the final punishment of impious and dangerous traitors. The country was in a ferment, the Tory party were active; the moderate classes were alarmed, the clergy were incensed; the Whigs became unpopular.

Harley seized the opportunity. He persuaded Mrs. Masham to persuade the Queen that now was the moment to gratify her new antipathy to her old favourite; that now she should punish the Duchess of Marlborough; that now she should dismiss the Whig ministry. She did so. He came in himself, and made Bolingbroke a secretary of state, and the first member in the House of Commons.

It has been said, and is very likely, that Harley would have preferred to retain in office the quiet and moderate Whigs, and not to bring in Bolingbroke, an extreme and unquiet Tory. The Whig party, however, was compact, and held together; it must be expelled as a whole, or retained as a whole. If it had been wholly retained, Harley could not have come in, and he was therefore obliged to ally himself with the aggravated Tories and with Bolingbroke, who had made himself their mouth-piece. It only completes the mingled character of Bolingbroke to repeat the legend of the time, that his acceptance of office was heard with gladness, not only in grave manor-houses, and by severe High Churchmen, but in more unmentionable places and by more questionable persons. Some ladies of much beauty and little virtue, so runs the legend, were heard to say, "Bolingbroke is minister. He has six thousand guineas a year. Six thousand guineas, and all for us." The auspices of such a ministry were not good.

The public aspect of affairs was, however, in the most critical particular very favourable. While the French War lasted, indeed, the new ministry must be perplexed. They must either retain the Duke of Marlborough as

general-in-chief, which was not pleasant, as he was the chief of the party opposed to them, and since probably Mrs Masham did not wish it, or they must dismiss the duke in the midst of victory, and find a new general, who might be defeated. But this painful alternative was temporary only. The English nation had been sated with sieges and victories, and more than sated with taxes and with debt, it was disposed to peace. The new ministry came therefore into the enjoyment of a great inheritance, the greatest that has ever fallen to a new ministry. France had been so reduced by Marlborough's victories that she was ready to consent to a peace which a few years before she would have thought most shameful, which a few years before we should have thought most honourable. The new ministry were to make that peace.

The preliminary difficulty soon assumed its worst shape. It became necessary to dismiss the Duke of Marlborough; and, as might be expected, the Duke of Ormond, who succeeded him, was much less successful. There was happily no great defeat, but there were minor disasters, which were magnified by the contrast with past glories. We had been used to a great exploit every year, and we were now asked to be thankful for not being defeated very much. The contrast was painful, and the necessity of making peace became greater than ever.

Up to this time Bolingbroke had been the most successful politician of his age, and almost of any age, in England. He had, it is true, no influence at court. Queen Anne distrusted him, she liked decorous men of regulated life. But, though little over thirty, he was the leader of the House of Commons, the first orator there; the second minister in the Cabinet; the favourite minister of the most ardent section of his party—a section just strengthened by an election. The fame of his oratory filled London, and the fame of his genius filled the country. Mr. Pitt excepted, no

Englishman had risen so high and so rapidly under our parliamentary system It was at this crisis that his eager nature and his life of excitement began to prepare his downfall, as they had prepared his rise

The official management of the foreign negotiations was in the hands of Bolingbroke Lord Dartmouth, the other secretary of state, could speak no French, and Harley, the Prime Minister, could speak but little ; but Bolingbroke spoke it well Harley, too, had no directing ability. He had the defects of the late Lord Aberdeen : he was moderate and useful and judicious But he could not upon the spur of the moment strike out a distinct policy Other statesmen must create before he could decide on their creations Bolingbroke was to devise how a peace should be made

A plain and strong-headed statesman—such a statesman as Walpole or as Palmerston—would have had little difficulty France was most anxious to make peace, and it mattered but little for England or for Europe what were the precise conditions of it There are occasions when a war itself does its own work, and does it better than any pacification The Crimean War was an instance of this That war thoroughly destroyed the prestige of Russia and the pernicious predominance of Russia At the end of it, what were to be the conditions of peace was almost immaterial. The wars of Marlborough had done their work also We had gone to war to prevent the acquisition of overbearing power by Louis XIV If a grandson who was devoted to him had succeeded to Spain and the Spanish empire while France was unexhausted, he would have been a despot in Europe , he would have been terrible to us as Napoleon was terrible. But nine years of continuous defeat had exhausted France, and Louis XIV. was now a vanquished and decayed old man At his death the crown of France would pass to Louis XV , who was an infant ; it was not much to be feared that the policy of France and the policy of Spain would be dangerously connected

because their kings were second cousins. Possibly, indeed, Louis XV. might die, and the King of Spain might come to the throne of France. But this was a remote and contingent danger; it would have been unwise in our ancestors to lavish blood and spend treasure because a prince might have died young who really lived to be extremely old. The true object of the war had been accomplished by the war itself, and the substantial task of making a peace was therefore very easy.

The accessories of the task, too, it would seem, were easy also. As we had been victorious in a first-rate war, it was right that we should be dignified in the final pacification. It was right that we should be ready, that we should even be anxious to make peace, but, at any rate, France, who was vanquished, ought to seem equally anxious. Since, in part, the war was a war to reduce her influence over the European imagination, the manner of making peace was at least as material as the terms of it. We were principal members of a great league, and we had stirred up a part of Spain to resist the French King of Spain. We were bound to keep clear faith with our allies, and bound not to desert brave provinces who had relied principally on our protection.

Bolingbroke was too eager to perceive these plain considerations. He sent a man to Paris to ask for peace, and the French minister was so astounded that he would hardly believe the man. He owned afterwards that, when he was asked the preliminary question, "Do you want a peace?" it seemed to him like asking a lingering invalid whether he wanted to recover. He could hardly bring himself to believe that Bolingbroke's messenger was duly authorized.

The previous life of that messenger certainly was not such as to gain him credit. He was a French abbé named Gaultier, who had been a French spy, and perhaps still was so, in England. He was an acute, plausible

person, very fat, and not very respectable, and altogether as unlikely a person to be sent from a victorious nation to a defeated nation as could be imagined

Nevertheless, the Abbé Gaultier was so sent. He said to Torcy, the French minister, "Do you want a peace? I bring you the means of treating independently of the Dutch, who are unworthy of his Majesty's kindness and the honour he has done them in addressing himself to them so many times to restore peace to Europe." In an ordinary alliance, such a clandestine reconciliation with the enemy, and such a secret desertion of allies, would have been plainly dishonest. There would have been little to say for it, and very few would have been willing to say that little. But the Grand Alliance was not an ordinary one. Its acute framers had perceived the difficulty of their task. They had foreseen the difficulty of retaining in firm cohesion a miscellaneous league of scattered States. They had adopted the best expedient at their disposal. They had prohibited the very commencement of exclusive negotiation by individual States. Their words are as clear as words can be. They are these "Neutri partium fas sit, Bello semel suscepto, de Pace cum Hoste tractare nisi conjunctim et communicatis conciliis cum altera Parte." These words expressly forbid such secret missions as those of Gaultier, and were inserted expressly to forbid them.

The separate treaty with Holland was even more express: it said that "no negotiation shall be set on foot by one of the allies without the concurrence of the other; and that each ally shall continually, and from time to time, impart to the other everything which passes in the said negotiation." And yet it was especially from Holland that Bolingbroke was anxious, by every secret disguise, and every diplomatic artifice, to conceal his negotiation. He hoped, by a separate and secret peace, to obtain commercial advantages for the English, in which the Dutch should have no share.

Even after the first mission of Gaultier had terminated, there was an intricate series of secret negotiations, in which he and Prior were employed for us, and Mesnager for the French. Prior expressly required on our behalf "that the secret should be inviolably kept till allowed by both parties to be divulged"; and the French minister wrote to Bolingbroke: "It wholly depends upon the secrecy and good use you will make of the entire confidence he testifies to the Queen of Great Britain; and the King of France extols the firmness of the Queen, and sees with great pleasure the new marks of resolution she shows" It was impossible to desert our allies more absolutely or more dishonourably. It was impossible to violate an express treaty more audaciously or more corruptly.

Nor was the secret negotiation a mere crime; it was also a miserable blunder. Diplomacy could hardly commit a greater. There was a splendid, a nearly unexampled power of compelling France to make a good peace. There was a great coalition against her, which had always been victorious under Eugene and Marlborough; which had obtained such successes as no Englishman had imagined, which had reduced France to a pitch of shame, degradation, and weakness, that surprised her most sanguine enemies, and depressed her most sanguine friends. So long as the coalition was compact, the coalition was all-powerful. But by the mere act of commencing a separate negotiation, Bolingbroke dissolved the coalition. There could be no mutual trust after that. The principal member of the league deserted the league, and its bond was immediately disunited. We all know what would have been the consequences if England had acted thus in the great war. Suppose Lords Grey and Grenville had come in before the campaign of 1814; suppose that they had sent a secret emissary to Napoleon, suppose that they had offered a separate peace without Spain, or Austria, or Russia. We know that Napoleon would again have

been a principal potentate in Europe, for the coalition which alone could extirpate him would have been dissolved

The truth of these remarks is written on the very face of the Treaty of Utrecht, and is obvious in every part of the negotiation of it. A few months before Louis had been willing to abandon Spain and to abandon his grandson. He had said, "If you can take Spain from him, take it ; I will not help him" But the allies were not content They required that Louis should compel his grandson to resign, and this he considered dishonourable But at Utrecht it was not even proposed that Philip should abandon Spain , that the house of Bourbon should possess Spain was a conceded and admitted principle We had dissolved the European confederacy, and we could not hope to attain its objects

Nor was the desertion of the other powers combined with us in the Grand Alliance our only desertion, or our worst All these powers were States of some magnitude, and some were States of great magnitude They would be able to go on as they had always gone on—to shift for themselves, as they had always shifted But we also deserted others who were not so independent. We had incited the Catalans in the north-east of Spain to resist the French King of Spain ; we had promised them in express terms our support and aid ; for a long time we had given them that aid. But at the Peace of Utrecht we deserted them. The Catalans made a brave resistance, but a small province could do nothing against a great nation The Catalans were soon overcome, and deprived of all their liberties. Throughout Europe, and doubtless throughout England also, there were many murmurs against our policy We had encouraged a brave people to rebel ; we had even threatened them if they did not rebel ; and when they did rebel, we deserted them. If, at present, France and England were to incite the Poles to rebel against Russia, they hardly could desert them—the public opinion of the world is

now so powerful ; in Queen Anne's time public opinion could only murmur, but it did murmur The Peace of Utrecht, men said, was a base crime as well as a gross blunder.

But why, it will be asked, did Bolingbroke commit so gross a blunder ? What reasons could have rendered it plausible to him ? The principal answer is the principal key to his character. With many splendid gifts, he was exceedingly defective in cool and plain judgment. He failed where in all ages such men as Alcibiades have failed Whether by nature he was much gifted with judgment we cannot tell , the probability is that he was about as well gifted as other men. But his life was such as to render a cool judgment impossible. " His fine imagination," says Lord Chesterfield, " was often heated and exhausted with his body in celebrating and almost deifying the prostitute of the night , and his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic bacchanals " Swift tells graphic stories of his drinking till his associates could drink no longer, and his being left at three in the morning calling for " t'other flask " Many men lead gross lives and keep cool heads, but such are not men of Bolingbroke's temperament A man like Walpole, or a man like Louis Napoleon, is protected by an unsensitive nature from intellectual destruction But such a man as Bolingbroke, whose nature is warm and whose imagination is excitable, imbibes the eager poison into the very heart of his mind Such is our protection against the possibilities of an Alcibiades. No one who has not a vivid imagination can succeed in such a career , and any man of vivid imagination that career would burn away and destroy Cold men may be wild in life and not wild in mind But warm and eager men, fit to be the favourites of society, and fit to be great orators, will be erratic not only in conduct but in judgment. They will see men " like trees walking."

Bolingbroke's excitement did not prevent his working.

He laboured many hours and wrote many letters. He often complains of the number of hours he has been at his desk, and of the labours which were thrown upon him. But his work probably only excited him the more; for a time *vires acquirit eundo* is the law of such wild strength. In the course of the negotiations he went to Paris, became the idol of society there, and used his social advantages efficiently for political purposes. To dazzle people more, he learned, or pretended to learn, the Spanish language, to read such diplomatic documents as were written in it. But such minor excellences could not mend the incurable badness of a peace commenced by a surrender of the best we had to surrender, by a dissolution of our alliance. A plain strong-headed man would have left alone the accessory advantages, and succeeded in the main point. Without Spanish and without French, Walpole would have made a good peace; Bolingbroke could not do so with both.

Bolingbroke, too, had a scheme, as imaginative and excited men will have. He knew that in relinquishing Spain to the house of Bourbon, he was giving the opponents of peace a great argumentative advantage. The mass of mankind, who judge by visible symbols, considered that a peace by which the king whom we had opposed should reign in Spain, and by which the king whom we had proposed did not reign there, was a gross failure. In sound argument, it was probably right for us to concede. As we have explained, the war had accomplished its own work, France was excessively weakened, and there was little fear of present danger from her. If, by a possible death, the crown of France should fall to the King of Spain, it would be time enough then to prevent the same person from reigning in the two kingdoms. The Treaty of Utrecht provides that the same prince shall not reign in both; and, if necessary, we could go to war to enforce the treaty. The Bourbon king was popular in Spain, and was preferred by the Spaniards to any one else. It would have been

hard to dislodge him. But Bolingbroke did not like to rely on these plain arguments. He hoped to make the peace popular by an appeal to our commercial jealousy, by gaining mercantile advantages for ourselves which our rivals the Dutch did not share. He obtained for us the celebrated Assiento contract, giving us the right of carrying negro slaves to the West Indies, and also certain privileges which would have given our manufacturers great advantage in the French markets. He hoped this commercial bribe would silence the national conscience—that it would induce us to forget our treachery to our allies, our desertion of the Catalans, and the establishment of the house of Bourbon in Spain. He hoped it would make the peace popular.

He was disappointed. The reception of that peace by the nation, and especially by the Tory party, was very like the reception of Mr. Disraeli's great Budget of 1852. A great secret had been long paraded of something which was to please everybody—it was divulged, and it pleased nobody. Bolingbroke may himself describe the effect that his work produced on the more moderate portion of his party :

“ The whimsical or the Hanover Tories continued zealous in appearance with us till the peace was signed. I saw no people so eager for the conclusion of it. Some of them were in such haste, that they thought any peace preferable to the least delay, and omitted no instances to quicken their friends who were actors in it. As soon as the treaties were perfected and laid before Parliament, the scheme of these gentlemen began to disclose itself entirely. Their love of the peace, like other passions, cooled by enjoyment. They grew nice about the construction of the articles, could come up to no direct approbation, and, being let into the secret of what was to happen, would not preclude themselves from the glorious advantage of rising on the ruins of their friends and of their party.”

Nothing could be more natural than their conduct. The moderate Tory party, and most sensible men, wished

for a satisfactory peace made in a satisfactory manner: they wished for dignity in diplomacy, and desirable results. They were disappointed. After a war which every one was proud of, we concluded a peace which nobody was proud of, in a manner that every one was ashamed of.

The commercial treaties on which Bolingbroke relied, so far from helping him, were a hindrance to him. The right of taking slaves to the West Indies was indeed popular: the day for anti-slavery scruples had not commenced. But, in return for the privileges which the French gave to our manufacturers, we had given many privileges to them. We had established an approximation to free-trade, and every one was aghast. The English producer clamoured for protection, and he has seldom clamoured in vain. The commercial treaties required the consent of Parliament, and were rejected. If Bolingbroke had been a free-trader upon principle, his convictions might have consoled him. But he professed to know nothing of commerce, and did know nothing. His books are full of nonsense on such topics: he hated the City because they were Whigs, and he hated the Dutch because he had deserted them; and these were his cardinal sentiments on mercantile affairs. He speaks of "matters, such as that of commerce, which the negotiators of the Peace of Utrecht could not be supposed to understand." Certainly he did not understand them. He only directed his subordinates to get out of the French as much for ourselves, and as little for the Dutch, as possible.

"Instead of gathering strength" (says Bolingbroke), "either as a ministry or as a party, we grew weaker every day. The peace had been judged with reason to be the only solid foundation whereupon we could erect a Tory system, and yet when it was made, we found ourselves at a full stand. Nay, the very work, which ought to have been the basis of our strength, was in part demolished before our eyes and we were stoned with the ruins of it."

In our time he would have been really stoned. The fierce warlike disposition of the English people would not have endured such dishonour. We may doubt if it would have endured any peace. It certainly would not have endured the best peace, unless it were made with dignity and with honesty. We should have been wildly elated by Marlborough's victories, and little in a mood to bear shame and to be guilty of desertion. The English people has been much the same for centuries. In country manor-houses, where a son had been killed for the cause which was sacrificed—in alehouses, where men were used to hear of glorious victories—in large towns, where the wrongs of injured races like the Catalans were understood—through a whole nation, which has ever been proud, brave, and honourable, a mean peace, effected by desertion, must have been abhorred. It was merely endured because it was made, and because in those days, when communication was slow, public opinion, as in America now, did not distinctly form itself till the crisis for action was over. But though for the moment endured, it was long abhorred. For very many years half our political talk was coloured by it. It was to the Tories what the coalition between Lord North and Fox was to the Whigs, a principal operating cause in excluding them from office during fifty years.

And, what for the time was worse, the Tory ministry of the moment was disunited. "Whilst this was doing," says Bolingbroke, "Harley looked on, as if he had not been a party to all which had passed; broke now and then a jest, which savoured of the Inns of Court, and the bad company in which he had been bred; and on those occasions where his station obliged him to speak of business, was absolutely unintelligible." In reality Harley disliked his position. He had always been a moderate man, respected by moderate men; he had the reputation of a man of care and judgment, and he had thriven by that reputation. On a sudden he became

a party to disreputable peace, at which even moderate Whigs were frantic, for which even moderate Tories could not vote. That the negotiations had commenced by artifice and deceit did not horrify him much, for he was a man much given to stratagem. But he knew also that the negotiation had ended in conspicuous meanness and unpopular concessions; he felt that his reputation for judgment was weakened. All shrewd observers knew that there would soon be disunion between Harley, the old head of the moderate Tories, and Bolingbroke, the present head of the extreme Tories. Swift, who was a very shrewd observer, and who was close at hand, knew that there was already disunion.

Before the treaties had been discussed by, and the commercial part of them rejected in, the House of Commons, Bolingbroke made another error. He left the House of Commons. Harley had been created Earl of Oxford, and he could not endure to be inferior to him. There was much delay in conferring the peerage, and he was very angry at it. He was, Oxford says, "in the utmost rage against the Treasurer, Lady Masham, and without sparing the greatest," and made "outrageous speeches." A wise friend would have observed to him that no greater kindness could have been done him than to refuse him a peerage altogether. The great but gradual revolution which was consummated in the time of Walpole was then beginning to be apparent. Before Queen Anne's time our most conspicuous statesmen had been, during the most important part of their lives, members of the House of Lords, since Queen Anne's time they have at similar periods been usually members of the House of Commons. There are several causes for this, but the principal is one on which Bolingbroke has often commented. From time immemorial the Commons have been the guardians of the public purse; and whenever the public purse was to be touched, they have always been the first body in the State. But before the revolution they were seldom

wanted. They granted the king, at the commencement of his reign, an estimated revenue, which was supposed to be adequate to the estimated expenditure in time of peace. As our wealth was rapidly increasing, it was often more than sufficient. In time of war the House of Commons must be applied to ; new money was needful for new expenses , but the ordinary expenditure went on every year without their being consulted or required The expense of William's wars and Queen Anne's wars made a great change taxation became larger than it had ever been, though very small as it seems to us now Since that time the estimated revenue which the Crown yearly enjoyed, without additional parliamentary aid, has scarcely ever been adequate to the estimated expenditure. There has yearly been a Budget, and yearly a recourse to the House of Commons The position of a minister in the House of Commons has therefore greatly risen Nine years out of ten the nation could at present dispense with the House of Lords—though a useful, it is an auxiliary power ; but every year we want a House of Commons, for it has to grant funds of primary necessity The minister who can manage the Commons, and extract from them the necessary moneys, has then become our most necessary minister.

The change was just beginning ; for Walpole, Bolingbroke's schoolfellow and parliamentary rival, ruled his generation by his parliamentary and financial abilities But Bolingbroke was too eager and impetuous to foresee the action of this powerful but obscure cause. The tradition had been, that the Peers were superior to the Commons, and he adhered to this tradition. He was angry till he obtained his peerage

Nor was he satisfied when he did obtain it. He was made a viscount only, and Harley had been made an earl He could not bear to be inferior to him in anything, especially as there was an extinct earldom in his own family He was vexed, angry, and dissatisfied.

Once he went out of town, and would attend to no business for days. He was angry too with the press. The Peace of Utrecht was attacked and assailed, and it was his peace. It is true that Bolingbroke should have been able to bear literary comments, even when rather bitter. He was himself through life an unscrupulous writer, using the press without reluctance and without cessation. He was then employing Swift, the most bitter writer of libels, both political and personal, that can be conceived. He lived with Swift in intimacy, and printed his libels. He gave him political information and ideas, and praised him when he used them so as most to hurt his adversaries. He ought to have been able to bear anything, yet he could bear nothing. He prosecuted many more persons than it was usual to prosecute then, and far more than have been prosecuted since. He thought, with a continental wit, that "a press is free when government newspapers are licentious." He thought that everything should be said for him, and that nothing should be said against him. The copyists of Alcibiades are commonly irritable, for neither their nature nor their habits teach them forbearance.

But neither Bolingbroke's disunion with his principal colleague, nor the attacks of the press, were his greatest danger. He was in the worst political position which can be imagined. As we have explained, the principal question of the age was a question of dynasty: after the peace with France it was the sole great question, it is in the nature of a topic so absorbing as to swallow up every subject of minor interest. There were only two solutions of the problem possible. The law prescribed one, and a sort of superstition prescribed another. The Act of Settlement said that the house of Hanover was to succeed Queen Anne, the doctrine of non-resistance said that the Pretender was to succeed her. The Jacobites adhered to the doctrine of non-resistance. The Whigs adhered to the Act of Parliament. Both these parties had a definite solution of the principal

topic of the hour. But between these fluctuated the great mass of the Tory party, who did not like the house of Hanover because it had no hereditary right, who did not like the Pretender because he was a Roman Catholic. This party objected to both possible solutions; they lived in the vague hope that the Pretender might turn Protestant—that some unforeseen circumstance would intervene—that Queen Anne would last their time. For persons in a private station such a state of mind was very possible and very natural. But it was of this very party that Bolingbroke was the spokesman and the leader, and he was a minister. He could not well remain without a distinct policy. Queen Anne, though not old, was often ill. She was suspected to be, and we now know she was, very near her death. He must make a choice.

Yet which king was Bolingbroke to choose? If he chose the house of Hanover, he himself ought not to be minister. This was the Whig candidate, this was the candidate whom his party disliked—at whom they murmured—whom they declined to support. A Tory ministry which should bring in the house of Hanover was like a Derbyite ministry that should propose free trade or reform of Parliament. It was a ministry which tried to maintain its existence by denying its party tenets. Probably in those times a Tory ministry could not have done what we have seen them do in our own time. Party spirit ran much stronger in Queen Anne's time than in ours. The political contentions of London were like the contests at a borough election now. At three o'clock on the polling day it was very difficult to change your politics and keep your character. So it was in London then. A fierce strife raged. Whig society and Tory society were separated like two hostile camps, and a deserter from one to the other was sure of contemptuous hatred from those he left, and of contemptuous patronage from those to whom he came. Bolingbroke could not do even once that which Mr Disraeli has done twice.

Bolingbroke's enemies have been very anxious to fix on him a formed design to bring in the Pretender. He would doubtless have been very glad to do so, if he could have formed a coherent scheme. But he could not. Oxford was far too moderate and timid a man to break the law, or to plan to break it. He had himself supported the Act of Settlement. He knew that the Hanoverian succession, though not popular in the imagination of any class, was acceptable to the reason of the most thinking class. He knew that the aristocracy, the large towns, and all the cultivated part of the community, were in favour of it. He knew that, as the aristocratic classes had the command of the House of Lords, of the small boroughs, and of very many counties, as the great towns were of themselves favourable, the house of Hanover was sure of a majority in Parliament. He knew that the general vulgar, and especially the rural vulgar, who were favourable to the house of Stuart, though numerically strong, were but weak in parliamentary representation. He was probably a party to some covert intrigues, for intrigue was intrinsically agreeable to him, but, in reality, he was too timid to abandon the plain and legal course for a tortuous and illegal one. Bolingbroke had, on the other hand, a constitutional predilection for violent courses, and no particular objection to an illegal course. If he could have turned out Oxford—if he could have carried his party with him, he would certainly have contrived some scheme for proclaiming the Pretender at Queen Anne's death. But even he was not mad enough to commit himself to a definite plan before he knew that he should have the power to execute it. In the meantime "Tom Harley," the Prime Minister's brother, exactly expressed the position of the ministry. "We ought," he said, "to be better or worse with Hanover than we are." The case, as men saw it then, was simple. The Queen was daily approaching the grave. The ministry in power were uncertain what to do in the

event of her death. They had "no settled intention" of breaking the law, Bolingbroke tells us; but he does not venture to contend that they had a settled intention of obeying it. They were drifting to a crisis without a plan.

Nor was Bolingbroke comfortable while the Queen lived. She herself did not like him. A smaller person has never been placed by the caprices of fate amid great affairs than the "good Queen Anne." She had not, Swift says, "a sufficient stock of amity" for more than one person at a time; she was always choosing a favourite upon whom to concentrate her affections exclusively. Her comprehension was as limited as her affections. She seriously objected, it is said, to one minister for appearing before her in a tie-wig instead of a full-bottom; and even if this anecdote has been exaggerated by continual narration, it expresses the sort of objections which ruled her mind and determined her conduct. She had a strong objection to all licence; decorum was a sort of morality to her, as to most great ladies; she would have been much puzzled to fix where manners ended and where morals began. Bolingbroke was licence personified; and therefore she distrusted and disliked him. She did not altogether approve, either, of the Peace of Utrecht. She probably did not understand the details, but she evidently understood that it was a "perplexing matter," and "not the sort of thing to which she had been accustomed under Lord Marlborough." The original strength of the Tory ministry had been in the Queen's predilection for Miss Hill, afterwards Lady Masham; Harley ruled Miss Hill, and Miss Hill ruled the Queen. But the Queen was not quite sure about Miss Hill. One of her tastes was a taste for aristocracy; and she was half ashamed of having taken a great liking to a waiting-maid who had been placed about her. She had an old predilection also for the Duchess of Somerset, by birth the last of the Percies, whose husband was a Whig. Swift was never

easy as to the effect of this friendship. He said, "The Duchess of Somerset is a proud woman, but I will pull her down;" so he libelled her, which did not make her more propitious to him or his masters. There was always a danger that the ex-waiting-maid, on whom all depended, should be discarded, as the Duchess of Marlborough had been discarded; that the Duchess of Somerset might become prime favourite in her stead; that the policy of the Government, and all the persons of our rulers, should be again changed by the inexplicable caprice of a quiet old lady.

And Bolingbroke had another difficulty. The distrust of him was not confined to Queen Anne. It extended through his party, and was an inevitable result of his peculiar position. He was an eloquent man without prejudices, speaking the prejudices of men who could not speak. But the speechless client and the eloquent advocate differ in nature so much that they can never much like or well understand each other. The Tory party knew that when Bolingbroke expressed their favourite conviction, he did not himself believe a word of what he was saying. And they could not tell what he did believe. And, being for the most part regular men of middle life from the agricultural counties, they did not much like to trust as their leader a young man of loose life about town. After the Peace of Utrecht especially, he could not tell what they would think, and they could not tell what he would do. They could never have anticipated his doing anything so mean as that, and he could never understand what disgrace there was in so obvious a diplomatic stratagem as breach of faith. In our own time it is easy to vex Tories. You have only to ask, "What is Dizzy's next move?" Such short words would not have suited our formal ancestors. But many a courteous Whig, doubtless, asked many a Tory, "What is to be my Lord Bolingbroke's next fine stroke of policy?" and the Tory could not have known what to say. So long as Oxford

was at the head of affairs common men felt that there was still something ordinary about the Government. But if Bolingbroke were to become sole minister, or chief minister, we should be subjected to the bold schemes of undiluted genius

In this difficult position Bolingbroke showed great ability. He could not, indeed, remove its irremovable defects. He could not declare for the house of Hanover; and he could not declare for the house of Stuart. He could not remove the dislike which a dull Queen, and a dull party, felt for a brilliant man. But what could be done he did. He showed great parliamentary ability, and was ever ready with wonderful eloquence. He pleased his party by a Schism Bill, agreeable to High Churchmen, and disagreeable to Dissenters. He obtained the favour of the waiting-maid, if he could not obtain that of the Queen, her mistress Miss Hill (or Lady Masham, as she now was) was a sort of relation of Oxford's; and this had first brought them together. For a long time the union was firm; he gave her much counsel and some money, and she gave him much power. But Oxford had a conscience, or vestiges of a conscience, in the use of public money. He was not ready to give Miss Hill, or Miss Hill's brother, all that they wanted. Swift puts it that he was too careful of the public interest for the corruption of the time; or, as we should put it, he would not bribe without limit against the public interest out of the public treasury. But Bolingbroke had no scruples; he bid higher; he gave Miss Hill and "Jack Hill" all he could, and promised that they should have more if they would make him first minister and maintain him as such. He himself may tell the result: "The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this, and how our fortune banters us!" Such was the close of three years of intrigue. He had bribed the waiting-maid just when the mistress was no more.

Nor at the moment was this the worst. The Queen's distrust of Bolingbroke had lasted till her death. The white staff—the "magic wand," as Bolingbroke calls it, long disused in English politics, but then the symbol of the Lord High Treasurer and of the Prime Minister—had been taken from Oxford, but it had not been given to any one. Bolingbroke could not gain it for himself. It was arranged that the Treasury should be put into commission, as it had been in King William's time, and as it always now is. Bolingbroke was to continue secretary of state, and be in fact principal minister, yet he was not to have the indefinite power of the Lord Treasurer—the mystic power of the white staff. But on her death-bed Queen Anne felt that Bolingbroke could not be trusted even so far. She was dying, and knew that she was dying. She doubtless felt that it was her duty to place the administration in the hands of some one who would obey the law on her death. She did not like the family of Hanover, she had the most keen repugnance to the presence of any of them in England during her life. She could not endure to see her successor close at hand, and it probably never struck her as a matter of duty to save the country from a possible convulsion of civil war. She was a very little-minded woman, but at the same time she was a decorous woman, and a well-meaning woman. She would not have planned or dared or wished to break the law which she had passed. As death was coming upon her, she knew that the practical premiership of Bolingbroke would endanger the security of the Act of Settlement. Of all statesmen he was least likely to obey it, and therefore most unfit to be Prime Minister when it was of critical importance to obey it. Obscurely, perhaps, but effectually, Queen Anne felt this. She gave the white staff to Shrewsbury; and Bolingbroke's three days of premiership were at an end.

Probably Bolingbroke felt the disaster the more that he was obliged to seem to assent to it. Shrewsbury had

been acting as confidential adviser to the Queen for some time, to Bolingbroke's dismay. He knew, he said, how he stood with Oxford—that was open war; but how he stood with Shrewsbury he did not know. As soon as the Queen was despaired of, the privy council was summoned, and by ordinary rule only those summoned should attend; a ministry thus secures a privy council of chosen friends. But at this meeting two Whig dukes, the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Argyle, attended, though not summoned, and by their influence the council was induced to ask the Queen to make Shrewsbury High Treasurer; and Bolingbroke was obliged to assent. Neither in the nation, nor at the court, had he substantial influence or effectual power.

He had in truth no alternative. A frantic bishop, Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, wanted him to proclaim the Pretender. But Bolingbroke, though a hot-headed statesman, had a notion of law and a perception of obvious consequences. He was not a hot-headed divine: he knew that by law George I. must be proclaimed at once; he knew that Shrewsbury, who wielded the white staff, which every one would obey, would at once proclaim George I. He knew that he could not himself command the obedience of a watchman. All the force of government had at once passed from him, and he acquiesced in the new order of things. He assisted at the proclamation of George I.

The law had indicated the steps which should be taken in case of the Queen's death, and before her successor could be brought over from Germany. A document was produced by the Hanoverian minister, naming Lords Justices, who were to administer the government until the arrival of George I. Of these Lords Justices, Bolingbroke, of course, was not one. They were all sound Whigs, and steady friends to the house of Hanover. As Bolingbroke had for four years been wielding the force of government so as to give pain to them, they immediately began to exercise it so as to

give pain to him. They appointed Addison as their secretary ; desired all documents to be addressed to him , and, though Bolingbroke was still in high office, and had at the last moment been real Prime Minister, they kept him waiting at their door with studied circumstances of indignity, which were much remarked on then, and which much tried his philosophy.

It would, however, have been well for Bolingbroke if mere indignities like these had been all which was in store for him, or all which he deserved. When Parliament met, zealous Whigs naturally began to murmur a good deal as to the past. Bolingbroke had ruled them hardly during his reign His ministry had removed Marlborough from his appointments ; his ministry had expelled Walpole from the House of Commons. Walpole would most likely have said that the Whig "innings" had arrived, and that the actions of their predecessors must be scrutinized. Bolingbroke for a time affected to fear nothing Oxford went to and fro in London, and Bolingbroke followed his example. All at once he changed his policy He appeared at the theatre in state, and took pains while there to attract attention; went home, changed his dress, and fled to France.

In truth, he was thoroughly frightened. He declared that " his blood was," he understood, " to have been the cement of a new alliance " between the moderate Tories and the Whigs. Some have traced this notion to the hints of Marlborough, but it was most likely due as much to Bolingbroke's own conscience. He knew well that the secret negotiations prior to the Peace of Utrecht would not bear even fair scrutiny. He knew that they were now to be subjected to hostile scrutiny. Even from impartial judges he could only expect condemnation, and his case would now be tried by his enemies His life, indeed, was in no danger. Neither the nation, nor the party opposed to him, were inclined to bloodshed ; but he felt he was in danger of something. His guilty conscience magnified the possibilities of pun-

ishment ; to escape them, he did exactly what was worst for his reputation Though it was as much as pleading guilty, he fled

He was attainted as a traitor in his absence, and there may be legal doubt as to whether the attainder was deserved. That a minister who advises his sovereign to violate a treaty, and who violates it accordingly, is worthy of severe punishment, will be admitted by every one , and that Bolingbroke had done this is beyond question or dispute But this offence does not amount to high treason, and the details of an incidental transaction as to the town of Tournay had to be pressed into the service ; and it required much stretching to make these amount even to a constructive treason But whatever might be the legal correctness or the incorrectness of the precise punishment inflicted on Bolingbroke is scarcely material now He well deserved a bill of " Pains and Penalties " ; and whether he was or was not visited with the very penalty that was most suitable does not matter much

On Bolingbroke's arrival in France, he looked about him for a while He was at once solicited by the emissaries of the Pretender, but he deliberated for some time, and it would have been wiser for him to have deliberated longer. He well knew that, though there was much latent Jacobite sentiment in England, there was no good material for a Jacobite rebellion Many squires and rectors and peasants would have been glad to see the legitimate king restored , but their zeal was not very active ; it belonged to the region of traditional sentiment and vague prejudice, rather than to that of practical and vigorous life The house of Hanover had the force of the government and the *sense* of the country in its favour. It was in possession, and Bolingbroke was aware that the Jacobites could not expel it from possession He knew all this well, but his passions were too strong for his judgment , from excitability, restlessness, and rage, he joined the Pretender He could

not help being busy, and hoped, or half-hoped, to be revenged on his enemies

He could not, however, long agree with his new associates. The descent from actual office to imaginary office was too sudden ; to many men it was pleasing to be secretary of state to a mock king, but it was very painful to one who had just been secretary to a real queen. His contempt, too, for the Irish associates of the Pretender was unbounded. He saw that they were hot-headed and ignorant men—who knew nothing of the country which they hoped to rule—whom that country would not endure for a day. He knew that the Roman Catholics in England were a small and unpopular body, and their aid more dangerous than their enmity. The genuine Jacobites distrusted him also. He said that they were untrustworthy because they were fools, and they said that he was untrustworthy because he was a traitor. This could not last ; after a brief interval, he left the Pretender and his court : they began to slander him, and he began to speak much evil of them.

With his secession from the Jacobites Bolingbroke's active career ends. He was afterwards only an aspirant for a career. He was, after several years, permitted to return to England, and to enjoy his estate, though he was an attainted traitor ; but the attainder was not reversed, and while it was in force he could not take his seat in the House of Lords, or hold any office whatever. He wrote much against Walpole, but he did not turn out Walpole. On one occasion he was much mortified because Pulteney and the practical opponents of Walpole said that the support of his name rather weakened than strengthened them. He gave in a long memorial of suggestions to George I ; but the King said they were “bagatelles”. He then fancied that he should become minister because of the support of Lady Suffolk, George II.'s mistress ; but Lady Suffolk had no influence, and Queen Caroline, who had predominant influence, supported Walpole. He then hoped to be minister under

the Prince of Wales, George II.'s son, and wrote a treatise on a "Patriot King" for that prince's use. But George II. outlived his son; and he was saved the mortification of seeing how little that small prince would have carried out his great ideas. Though he survived Queen Anne more than thirty years, he never after her death attained to a day's power in England. Three years of eager unwise power, and thirty-five of sickly longing and impotent regret—such, or something like it, will ever be in this cold modern world the fate of an Alcibiades.

## THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY \*

(1856)

THIS is a marvellous book Everybody has read it, and every one has read it with pleasure. It has little advantage of subject. When the volumes came out, an honest man said, "I suppose something happened between the years 1689 and 1697; but what happened I do not know" Every one knows now No period with so little obvious interest will henceforth be so familiarly known Only a most felicitous and rather curious genius could and would shed such a light on such an age If in the following pages we seem to cavil and find fault, let it be remembered, that the business of a critic is criticism; that it is *not* his business to be thankful, that he must attempt an estimate rather than a eulogy

Macaulay † seems to have in a high degree the temperament most likely to be that of a historian. This may be summarily defined as the temperament which inclines men to take an interest in actions as contrasted with objects, and in past actions in preference to present actions We should expand our meaning Some people are unfortunately born scientific They take much interest in the objects of nature They feel a curiosity about shells, snails, horses, butterflies They are

\* *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*  
By Thomas Babington Macaulay Longmans

† This paper was of course published before Lord Macaulay received his peerage

delighted at an ichthyosaurus, and excited at a polyp ; they are learned in minerals, vegetables, animals , they have skill in fishes, and attain renown in pebbles : in the highest cases they know the great causes of grand phenomena, can indicate the courses of the stars or the current of the waves , but in every case their minds are directed not to the actions of man, but to the scenery amidst which he lives ; not to the inhabitants of this world, but to the world itself ; not to what most resembles themselves, but to that which is most unlike What compels men to take an interest in what they do take an interest in, is commonly a difficult question —for the most part, indeed, it is an insoluble one ; but in this case it would seem to have a negative cause—to result from the absence of an intense and vivid nature The inclination of mind which abstracts the attention from that in which it can feel sympathy to that in which it cannot, seems to arise from a want of sympathy. A tendency to devote the mind to trees and stones as much as to, or in preference to, men and women, appears to imply that the intellectual qualities, the abstract reason, and the inductive scrutiny which can be applied equally to trees and to men, to stones and to women, predominate over the more special qualities solely applicable to our own race,—the keen love, the eager admiration, the lasting hatred, the lust of rule which fasten men's interests on people and to people. As a confirmation of this, we see that, even in the greatest cases, scientific men have been calm men. Their actions are unexceptionable ; scarcely a spot stains their excellence : if a doubt is to be thrown on their character, it would be rather that they were insensible to the temptations than that they were involved in the offences of ordinary men An aloofness and abstractedness cleave to their greatness There is a coldness in their fame. We think of Euclid as of fine ice , we admire Newton as we admire the Peak of Teneriffe. Even the intensest labours, the most remote

triumphs of the abstract intellect, seem to carry us into a region different from our own—to be in a *terra incognita* of pure reasoning, to cast a chill on human glory.

We know that the taste of most persons is quite opposite. The tendency of man is to take an interest in man, and almost in man only. The world has a vested interest in itself. Analyse the minds of the crowd of men, and what will you find? Something of the outer earth, no doubt,—odd geography, odd astronomy, doubts whether Scutari is in the Crimea, investigations whether the moon is less or greater than Jupiter; some idea of herbs, more of horses; ideas, too, more or less vague, of the remote and supernatural,—notions which the tongue cannot speak, which it would seem the world would hardly bear if thoroughly spoken. Yet, setting aside these which fill the remote corners and lesser outworks of the brain, the whole stress and vigour of the ordinary faculties is expended on their possessor and his associates, on the man and on his fellows. In almost all men, indeed, this is not simply an intellectual contemplation, we not only look on, but act. The impulse to busy ourselves with the affairs of men goes farther than the simple attempt to know and comprehend them: it warms us with a further life, it incites us to stir and influence those affairs; its animated energy will not rest till it has hurried us into toil and conflict. At this stage the mind of the historian, as we abstractedly fancy it, naturally breaks off: it has more interest in human affairs than the naturalist; it instinctively selects the actions of man for occupation and scrutiny, in preference to the habits of fishes or the structure of stones, but it has not so much vivid interest in them as the warm and active man. To know is sufficient for it; it can bear not to take a part. A want of impulse seems born with the disposition. To be constantly occupied about the actions of others; to have constantly presented to your contemplation and attention events and occur-

rences memorable only as evincing certain qualities of mind and will, which very qualities in a measure you feel within yourself, and yet to be without an impulse to exhibit them in the real world, "which is the world of all of us";\* to contemplate, yet never act; "to have the House before you," and yet to be content with the reporters' gallery,—shows a chill impassiveness of temperament, a sluggish insensibility to ardent impulse, a heavy immobility under ordinary emotion. The image of the stout Gibbon placidly contemplating the animated conflict; the stirring pleadings of Fox and Burke, watching a revolution and heavily taking no part in it, gives an idea of the historian as he is likely to be. "Why," it is often asked, "is history dull? It is a narrative of life, and life is of all things the most interesting." The answer is, that it is written by men too dull to take the common interest in life, in whom languor predominates over zeal, and sluggishness over passion.

Macaulay is not dull, and it may seem hard to attempt to bring him within the scope of a theory which is so successful in explaining dullness. Yet, in a modified and peculiar form, we can perhaps find in his remarkable character unusually distinct traces of the insensibility which we ascribe to the historian. The means of scrutiny are ample. Macaulay has not spent his life in a corner; if posterity should refuse—of course they will not refuse—to read a line of his writings, they would yet be sought out by studious inquirers, as those of a man of high political position, great notoriety, and greater oratorical power. We are not therefore obliged, as in so many cases even among contemporaries, to search for the author's character in his books alone; we are able from other sources to find out his character, and then apply it to explain the peculiarities of his works. Macaulay has exhibited many high attainments,

\* Wordsworth "The Prelude," book xi.

many dazzling talents, much singular and well-trained power, but the quality which would most strike the observers of the interior man is what may be called his *mexperiencing* nature. Men of genius are in general distinguished by their extreme susceptibility to external experience. Finer and softer than other men, every exertion of their will, every incident of their lives, influences them more deeply than it would others. Their essence is at once finer and more impressible, it receives a distincter mark, and receives it more easily than the souls of the herd. From a peculiar sensibility, the man of genius bears the stamp of life commonly more clearly than his fellows; even casual associations make a deep impression on him: examine his mind, and you may discern his fortunes. Macaulay has nothing of this. You could not tell what he has been. His mind shows no trace of change. What he is, he was; and what he was, he is. He early attained a high development, but he has not increased it since; years have come, but they have whispered little; as was said of the second Pitt, "He never grew, he was cast" The volume of speeches which he has published places the proof of this in every man's hand. His first speeches are as good as his last, his last scarcely richer than his first. He came into public life at an exciting season; he shared of course in that excitement, and the same excitement still quivers in his mind. He delivered marvellous rhetorical exercises on the Reform Bill when it passed, he speaks of it with rhetorical interest even now. He is still the man of '32. From that era he looks on the past. He sees "Old Sarum" in the seventeenth century, and Gation in the civil wars. You may fancy an undertone. The Norman barons commenced the series of reforms which "we consummated"; Hampden was "preparing for the occasion in which I had a part", William "for the debate in which I took occasion to observe." With a view to that era everything begins; up to that moment every-

thing ascends. That was the "fifth act" of the human race ; the remainder of history is only an afterpiece. All this was very natural at the moment ; nothing could be more probable than that a young man of the greatest talents, entering at once into important life at a conspicuous opportunity, should exaggerate its importance ; he would fancy it was the "crowning achievement," the greatest "in the tide of time." But the singularity is, that he should retain the idea now ; that years have brought no influence, experience no change. The events of twenty years have been full of rich instruction on the events of twenty years ago ; but they have not instructed him. His creed is a fixture. It is the same on his peculiar topic—on India. Before he went there he made a speech on the subject ; Lord Canterbury, who must have heard a million speeches, said it was the best that he had ever heard. It is difficult to fancy that so much vivid knowledge could be gained from books—from horrible Indian treatises ; that such imaginative mastery should be possible, without actual experience. Not forgetting, or excepting, the orations of Burke, it was perhaps as remarkable a speech as was ever made on India by an Englishman who had not been in India. Now he has been there he speaks no better—rather worse, he spoke excellently without experience, he speaks no better with it,—if anything, it rather puts him out. His speech on the Indian charter a year or two ago was not finer than that on the charter of 1833. Before he went to India he recommended that writers should be examined in the classics ; after being in India he recommended that they should be examined in the same way. He did not say he had seen the place in the meantime ; he did not think that had anything to do with it. You could never tell from any difference in his style what he had seen, or what he had not seen. He is so insensible to passing objects, that they leave no distinctive mark, no intimate peculiar trace.

Such a man would naturally think literature more instructive than life. Hazlitt said of Mackintosh, " He might like to read an *account* of India, but India itself, with its burning, shining face, was a mere blank, an endless waste to him Persons of this class have no more to say to a plain matter of fact staring them in the face than they have to say to a *hippopotamus*"\* This was a keen criticism on Sir James, savouring of the spleenetic mind from which it came As a complete estimate, it would be a most unjust one of Macaulay; but we know that there is a whole class of minds which prefers the literary delineation of objects to the actual eyesight of them To some life is difficult. An insensible nature, like a rough hide, resists the breath of passing things, an unobserving retina in vain depicts whatever a quicker eye does not explain But any one can understand a book, the work is done, the facts observed, the formulæ suggested, the subjects classified Of course it needs labour, and a following fancy, to peruse the long lucubrations and descriptions of others, but a fine detective sensibility is unnecessary; type is plain, an earnest attention will follow it and know it. To this class Macaulay belongs: and he has characteristically maintained that dead authors are more fascinating than living people

" Those friendships," he tells us, " are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved Time glides by, fortune is inconstant, tempers are soured, bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry In the dead there is no change Plato is

\* Essay in the *Spirit of the Age*

never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet." \*

But Bossuet is dead ; and Cicero was a Roman ; and Plato wrote in Greek. Years and manners separate us from the great. After dinner, Demosthenes *may* come unseasonably ; Dante *might* stay too long. We are alienated from the politician, and have a horror of the theologian. Dreadful idea, having Demosthenes for an intimate friend ! He had pebbles in his mouth , he was always urging action ; he spoke such good Greek ; we cannot dwell on it,—it is too much. Only a mind impassive to our daily life, unalive to bores and evils, to joys and sorrows, incapable of the deepest sympathies, a prey to print, could imagine it. The mass of men have stronger ties and warmer hopes. The exclusive devotion to books tires. We require to love and hate, to act and live.

It is not unnatural that a person of this temperament should preserve a certain aloofness even in the busiest life. Macaulay has ever done so. He has been in the thick of political warfare, in the van of party conflict. Whatever a keen excitability would select for food and opportunity, has been his ; but he has not been excited. He has never thrown himself upon action, he has never followed trivial details with an anxious passion. He has ever been a man for a great occasion. He was by nature a *deus ex machinâ*. Somebody has had to fetch him. His heart was in Queen Anne's time. When he came, he spoke as Lord Halifax might have spoken. Of course, it may be contended that this is the *eximia ars* ; that this solitary removed excellence is particularly and essentially sublime. But, simply and really, greater men have been more deeply "immersed in

\* *Essay on "Bacon"*

matter." \* The highest eloquence quivers with excitement ; there is life-blood in the deepest actions ; a man like Stafford seems flung upon the world. An orator should never talk like an observatory ; no coldness should strike upon the hearer.

It is characteristic also that Macaulay should be continually thinking of posterity. In general, that expected authority is most ungrateful ; those who think of it most, it thinks of least. The way to secure its favour is, to give vivid essential pictures of the life before you ; to leave a fresh glowing delineation of the scene to which you were born, of the society to which you have peculiar access. This is gained, not by thinking of your posterity, but by living in society ; not by poring on what is to be, but by enjoying what is. That spirit of thorough enjoyment which pervades the great delineators of human life and human manners, was not caused by " being made after supper, out of a cheese-paring " ; † it drew its sustenance from a relishing, enjoying, sensitive life, and the flavour of the description is the reality of that enjoyment. Of course this is not so in science. You may leave a name by an abstract discovery, without having led a vigorous existence ; yet what a name is this ! Taylor's theorem will go down to posterity,—possibly its discoverer was for ever dreaming and expecting it would ; but what does posterity know of the deceased Taylor ? *Nominius umbra* ‡ is rather a compliment ; for it is not substantial enough to have a shadow. But in other walks,—say in political oratory, which is the part of Macaulay's composition in which his value for posterity's opinion is most apparent,—the way to interest posterity is to think but little of it. What gives to the speeches of Demosthenes the interest they have ? The intense,

\* *Locke on the Human Understanding*, book iv, chap. iii, 1, 2

† " 2 King Henry IV," in 2  
‡ *Stat nominis umbra* ; the famous motto of Junius (Forrest Morgan)

vivid, glowing interest of the speaker in all that he is speaking about. Philip is not a person whom " posterity will censure," but the man " whom I hate " : the matter in hand not one whose interest depends on the memory of men, but in which an eager intense nature would have been absorbed, if there had been no posterity at all, on which he wished to deliver his own soul. A *casual* character, so to speak, is natural to the most intense words ; externally, even, they will interest the " after world " more for having interested the present world ; they must have a life of *some* place and *some* time before they can have one of all space and all time. Macaulay's oratory is the very opposite of this. Schoolboyish it is not, for it is the oratory of a very sensible man ; but the theme of a schoolboy is not more devoid of the salt of circumstance. The speeches on the Reform Bill have been headed, " Now, a man came up from college and spoke thus ; " and, like a college man, he spoke rather to the abstract world than to the present. He knew no more of the people who actually did live in London than of people who would live in London, and there was, therefore, no reason for speaking to one more than to the other. After years of politics, he speaks so still. He looks on a question (he says) as posterity will look on it ; he appeals from this to future generations ; he regards existing men as painful pre-requisites of great-grandchildren. This seems to proceed, as has been said, from a distant and unimpressible nature. But it is impossible to deny that it has one great advantage : it has made him take pains. A man who speaks to people a thousand years off, will naturally speak carefully : he tries to be heard over the clang of ages, over the rumours of myriads. Writing for posterity is like writing on foreign post paper : you cannot say to a man at Calcutta what you would say to a man at Hackney ; you think " the yellow man is a very long way off, this is fine paper, it will go by a ship " ; so you try to say something worthy of the ship, some-

thing noble, which will keep and travel. Writers like Macaulay, who think of future people, have a respect for future people. Each syllable is solemn, each word distinct. No author trained to periodical writing has so little of its slovenliness and its imperfection.

This singularly constant contemplation of posterity has coloured his estimate of social characters. He has no toleration for those great men in whom a lively sensibility to momentary honours has prevailed over a consistent reference to the posthumous tribunal. He is justly severe on Lord Bacon :

“ In his library, all his rare powers were under the guidance of an honest ambition, of an enlarged philanthropy, of a sincere love of truth. There no temptation drew him away from the right course. Thomas Aquinas could pay no fees, Duns Scotus could confer no peerages. The ‘Master of the Sentences’\* had no rich reversions in his gift. Far different was the situation of the great philosopher when he came forth from his study and his laboratory to mingle with the crowds which filled the galleries of White-hall. In all that crowd there was no man equally qualified to render great and lasting services to mankind. But in all that crowd there was not a heart more set on things which no man ought to suffer to be necessary to his happiness,—on things which can often be obtained only by the sacrifice of integrity and honour. To be the leader of the human race in the career of improvement, to found on the ruins of ancient intellectual dynasties a more prosperous and more enduring empire, to be revered to the latest generations as the most illustrious among the benefactors of mankind,—all this was within his reach. But all this availed him nothing, while some quibbling special pleader was promoted before him to the bench,—while some heavy country gentleman took precedence of him by virtue of a purchased coronet,—while some pander, happy in a fair wife, could obtain a more cordial salute from Buckingham,—while some buffoon, versed in all the latest scandal of the Court, could draw a louder laugh from James.”

\* Peter the Lombard, author of a famous collection of “Sentences,” from the Church fathers. (Forrest Morgan.)

Yet a less experience, or a less opportunity of experience, would have warned a mind more observant that the bare desire for long posthumous renown is but a feeble principle in common human nature. Bacon had as much of it as most men. The keen excitability to this world's temptations must be opposed by more exciting impulses, by more retarding discouragements, by conscience, by religion, by fear. If you would vanquish earth, you must "invent heaven." It is the fiction of a cold abstractedness that the possible respect of unseen people can commonly be more desired than the certain homage of existing people.

In a more conspicuous manner the chill nature of the most brilliant among English historians is shown in his defective dealing with the passionate eras of our history. He has never been attracted, or not proportionally attracted, by the singular mixture of heroism and slavishness, of high passion and base passion, which mark the Tudor period. The defect is apparent in his treatment of a period on which he has written powerfully—the time of the civil wars. He has never in the highest manner appreciated either of the two great characters—the Puritan and the Cavalier—which are the form and life of those years. What historian, indeed, has ever estimated the Cavalier character? There is Clarendon—the grave, rhetorical, decorous lawyer—piling words, congealing arguments,—very stately, a little grim. There is Hume—the Scotch metaphysician—who has made out the best case for such people as never were, for a Charles who never died, for a Strafford who would never have been attainted,—a saving, calculating North-countryman,—fat, impassive,—who lived on eightpence a day. What have these people to do with an enjoying English gentleman? It is easy for a doctrinaire to bear a post-mortem examination,—it is much the same whether he be alive or dead; but not so with those who live during their life, whose essence is existence, whose being is in animation.

There seem to be some characters who are not made for history, as there are some who are not made for old age. A Cavalier is always young. The buoyant life arises before us rich in hope, strong in vigour, irregular in action; men young and ardent, framed in the "prodigality of nature";\* open to every enjoyment, alive to every passion; eager, impulsive; brave without discipline; noble without principle; prizing luxury, despising danger, capable of high sentiment, but in each of whom the

"Addiction was to courses vain,  
His companies unlettered, rude and shallow,  
His hours filled up with riots, banquets, sports,  
And never noted in him any study,  
Any retirement, any sequestration  
From open haunts and popularity" †

We see these men setting forth or assembling to defend their King and Church, and we see it without surprise; a rich daring loves danger; a deep excitability likes excitement. If we look around us, we may see what is analogous. Some say that the battle of the Alma was won by the "uneducated gentry"; the "uneducated gentry" would be Cavaliers now. The political sentiment is part of the character. The essence of Toryism is enjoyment. Talk of the ways of spreading a wholesome Conservatism throughout this country. give painful lectures, distribute weary tracts (and perhaps this is as well—you may be able to give an argumentative answer to a few objections, you may diffuse a distinct notion of the dignified dullness of politics), but as far as communicating and establishing your creed are concerned—try a little pleasure. The way to keep up old customs is, to enjoy old customs, the way to be satisfied with the present state of things

\* "King Richard III," 1 2.  
† "Henry V," 1 1.

is, to enjoy that state of things. Over the "Cavalier" mind this world passes with a thrill of delight; there is an exultation in a daily event, zest in the "regular thing," joy at an old feast. Sir Walter Scott is an example of this. Every habit and practice of old Scotland was inseparably in his mind associated with genial enjoyment. To propose to touch one of her institutions, to abolish one of those practices, was to touch a personal pleasure—a point on which his mind reposed, a thing of memory and hope. So long as this world is this world, will a buoyant life be the proper source of an animated Conservatism. The "Church-and-King" enthusiasm has even a deeper connection with the Cavaliers. Carlyle has said, in his vivid way, "Two or three young gentlemen have said, 'Go to, I will *make* a religion.'" This is the exact opposite of what the irregular, enjoying man can think or conceive. What! is he, with his untrained mind and his changeful heart and his ruleless practice, to create a creed? Is the gushing life to be asked to construct a cistern? Is the varying heart to be its own master, the evil practice its own guide? Sooner will a ship invent its own rudder, devise its own pilot, than the eager being will find out the doctrine which is to restrain him. The very intellect is a type of the confusion of the soul. It has little arguments on a thousand subjects, hearsay sayings, original flashes, small and bright, struck from the heedless mind by the strong impact of the world. And it has nothing else. It has no systematic knowledge; it has a hatred of regular attention. What can an understanding of this sort do with refined questioning or subtle investigation? It is obliged in a sense by its very nature to take what comes, it is overshadowed in a manner by the religion to which it is born; its conscience tells it that it owes obedience to something, it craves to worship something; that something, in both cases, it takes from the past. "Thou hast not chosen me, but I have chosen thee," might

his faith say to a believer of this kind. A certain bigotry is altogether natural to him His creed seems to him a primitive fact, as certain and evident as the stars. The political faith (for it is a faith) of these persons is of a kind analogous The virtue of loyalty assumes in them a passionate aspect, and overflows, as it were, all the intellect which belongs to the topic. This virtue, this need of our nature, arises, as political philosophers tell us, from the conscious necessity which man is under of obeying an external moral rule. We feel that we are by nature and by the constitution of all things under an obligation to conform to a certain standard, and we seek to find or to establish in the sphere without, an authority which shall enforce it, shall aid us in compelling others and also in mastering ourselves. When a man impressed with this principle comes in contact with the institution of civil government as it now exists and as it has always existed, he finds what he wants—he discovers an authority ; and he feels bound to submit to it We do not, of course, mean that all this takes place distinctly and consciously in the mind of the person , on the contrary, the class of minds most subject to its influence are precisely those which have in general the least defined and accurate consciousness of their own operations, or of what befalls them. In matter of fact, they find themselves under the control of laws and of a polity from the earliest moment that they can remember, and they obey it from habit and custom years before they know why. Only in later life, when distinct thought is from an outward occurrence forced upon them, do they feel the necessity of some such power ; and in proportion to their passionate and impulsive disposition they feel it the more. The law has in a less degree on them the same effect which military discipline has in a greater. It braces them to defined duties, and subjects them to a known authority Quieter minds find this authority in an internal conscience ; but in riotous natures its still

small voice is lost if it be not echoed in loud harsh tones from the firm and outer world :

“ Their breath is agitation, and their life  
A storm whereon they ride.” \*

From without they crave a bridle and a curb. The doctrine of non-resistance is no *accident* of the Cavalier character, though it seems at first sight singular in an eager, tumultuous disposition. So inconsistent is human nature, that it proceeds from the very extremity of that tumult. They know that they cannot allow themselves to question the authority which is upon them ; they feel its necessity too acutely, their intellect is untrained in subtle disquisitions, their conscience fluctuating, their passions rising. They are sure that if they once depart from that authority, their whole soul will be in anarchy. As a riotous state tends to fall under a martial tyranny, a passionate mind tends to subject itself to an extrinsic law—to enslave itself to an outward discipline. “ That is what the king says, boy, and that was ever enough for Sir Henry Lee.” An hereditary monarch is, indeed, the very embodiment of this principle. The authority is so defined, so clearly vested, so evidently intelligible ; it descends so distinctly from the past, it is imposed so conspicuously from without. Anything free refers to the people ; anything elected seems self-chosen. “ The divinity that doth hedge a king ” † consists in his evidently representing an unmade, unchosen, hereditary duty.

The greatness of this character is not in Macaulay’s way, and its faults are. Its license affronts him ; its riot alienates him. He is for ever contrasting the dissoluteness of Prince Rupert’s Horse with the restraint of Cromwell’s pikemen. A deep enjoying nature finds no sympathy. The brilliant style passes forward : we

\* “ Childe Harold,” canto iii., ver. 44

† “ Hamlet,” i. 5

dwell on its brilliancy, but it is cold Macaulay has no tears for that warm life, no tenderness for that extinct joy The ignorance of the Cavalier, too, moves his wrath : " They were ignorant of what every schoolgirl knows." Their loyalty to their sovereign is the devotion of the Egyptians to the god Apis, who selected a " calf to adore " Their non-resistance offends the philosopher : their license is commented on with the tone of a precisian. Their indecorum does not suit the dignity of the narrator. Their rich free nature is unappreciated ; the tingling intensity of their joy is unnoticed In a word, there is something of the schoolboy about the Cavalier—there is somewhat of a schoolmaster about the historian.

It might be thought, at first sight, that the insensibility and coldness which are unfavourable to the appreciation of the Cavalier would be particularly favourable to that of the Puritan. Some may say that a natural aloofness from things earthly would dispose a man to the doctrines of a sect which enjoins above all other commandments abstinence and aloofness *from* those things In Macaulay's case it certainly has had no such consequence. He was bred up in the circle which more than any other has resembled that of the greatest and best Puritans—in the circle which has presented the evangelical doctrine in its most influential and celebrated, and not its least genial form Yet he has revolted against it. " The bray of Exeter Hall " is a phrase which has become celebrated ; it is an odd one for his father's son The whole course of his personal fortunes, the entire scope of his historical narrative, show an utter want of sympathy with the Puritan disposition. It would be idle to quote passages ; it will be enough to recollect the contrast between the estimate—say, of Cromwell—by Carlyle and that by Macaulay, to be aware of the enormous discrepancy. The one's manner evinces an instinctive sympathy, the other's an instinctive aversion

We believe that this is but a consequence of the

same impassibility of nature which we have said so much of. M de Montalembert, in a striking *éloge* on a French historian\*—a man of the Southey type—after speaking of his life in Paris during youth (a youth cast in the early and exciting years of the first Revolution, and of the prelude to it), and graphically portraying a man subject to scepticism, but not given to vice; staid in habits, but unbelieving in opinion; without faith and without irregularity,—winds up the whole by the sentence, that “*he was hardened at once against good and evil*” In his view, the insensibility which was a guard against exterior temptation was also a hindrance to inward belief: and there is a philosophy in this. The nature of man is not two things, but one thing. We have not one set of affections, hopes, sensibilities, to be affected by the present world, and another and a different to be affected by the invisible world: we are moved by grandeur, or we are not; we are stirred by sublimity, or we are not; we hunger after righteousness, or we do not; we hate vice, or we do not; we are passionate, or not passionate, loving, or not loving; cold, or not cold; our heart is dull, or it is wakeful; our soul is alive, or it is dead. Deep under the surface of the intellect lies the *stratum* of the passions, of the intense, peculiar, simple impulses which constitute the heart of man; there is the eager essence, the primitive desiring being. What stirs this latent being we know. In general it is stirred by everything. Sluggish natures are stirred little, wild natures are stirred much: but all are stirred somewhat. It is not important whether the object be in the visible or invisible world: whoso loves what he has seen, will love what he has not seen; whoso hates what he has seen, will hate what he has not seen. Creation is, as it were, but

\* Droz (author of the *History of Louis XIV*, etc), whom Montalembert succeeded in the Académie Française, and whose *éloge* he pronounced, according to custom, on 5th December 1852. (Forrest Morgan)

the garment of the Creator: whoever is blind to the beauty on its surface, will be insensible to the beauty beneath; whoso is dead to the sublimity before his senses, will be dull to that which he imagines; whoso is untouched by the visible man, will be unmoved by the invisible God. These are no new ideas; and the conspicuous evidence of history confirms them. Everywhere the deep religious organization has been deeply sensitive to this world. If we compare what are called sacred and profane literatures, the depth of human affection is deeper in the sacred. A warmth as of life is on the Hebrew, a chill as of marble is on the Greek. In Jewish history the most tenderly religious character is the most sensitive to earth. Along every lyric of the Psalmist thrills a deep spirit of human enjoyment; he was alive as a child to the simple aspects of the world; the very errors of his mingled career are but those to which the open, enjoying character is most prone; its principle, so to speak, was a tremulous passion for that which he had seen, as well as that which he had not seen. There is no paradox, therefore, in saying that the same character which least appreciates the impulsive and ardent Cavalier is also the most likely not to appreciate the warm zeal of an overpowering devotion.

Some years ago it would have been necessary to show at length that the Puritans had such a devotion. The notion had been that they were fanatics, who simulated zeal, and hypocrites, who misquoted the Old Testament. A new era has arrived; one of the great discoveries which the competition of authors has introduced into historical researches has attained a singular popularity. Times are changed. We are rather now, in general, in danger of holding too high an estimate of the puritanical character than a too low or contemptuous one. Among the disciples of Carlyle it is considered that having been a Puritan is the next best thing to having been in Germany. But though

we cannot sympathize with everything that the exponents of the new theory allege, and though we should not select for praise the exact peculiarities most agreeable to the slightly grim "gospel of earnestness," we acknowledge the great service which they have rendered to English history. No one will now ever overlook, that in the greater, in the original Puritans—in Cromwell, for example—the whole basis of the character was a passionate, deep, rich, religious organization.

This is not in Macaulay's way. It is not that he is sceptical; far from it. "Divines of all persuasions," he tells us, "are agreed that there is a religion;" and he acquiesces in their teaching. But he has no passionate self-questionings, no indomitable fears, no asking perplexities. He is probably pleased at the exemption. He has praised Bacon for a similar want of interest. "Nor did he ever meddle with those enigmas which have puzzled hundreds of generations, and will puzzle hundreds more. He said nothing about the grounds of moral obligation, or the freedom of the human will. He had no inclination to employ himself in labours resembling those of the damned in the Grecian Tartarus—to spin for ever on the same wheel round the same pivot. He lived in an age in which disputes on the most subtle points of divinity excited an intense interest throughout Europe; and nowhere more than in England. He was placed in the very thick of the conflict. He was in power at the time of the Synod of Dort, and must for months have been daily deafened with talk about election, reprobation, and final perseverance. Yet we do not remember a line in his works from which it can be inferred that he was either a Calvinist or an Arminian. While the world was resounding with the noise of a disputatious philosophy and a disputatious theology, the Baconian school, like Allworthy seated between Square and Thwackum,\*

\* In Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

preserved a calm neutrality,—half-scornful, half-benevolent,—and, content with adding to the sum of practical good, left the war of words to those who liked it." This may be the writing of good sense, but it is not the expression of an anxious or passionate religious nature.

Such is the explanation of Macaulay's not prizeso highly as he should prize the essential excellences of the Puritan character. He is defective in the one point in which they were very great; he is eminent in the very point in which they were most defective. A spirit of easy cheerfulness pervades his writings, a pleasant geniality overflows his history: the rigid asceticism, the pain for pain's sake, of the Puritan is altogether alien to him. Retribution he would deny; sin is hardly a part of his creed. His religion is one of thanksgiving. His notion of philosophy—it would be a better notion of his own writing—is *illustrius commoda vita*.

The English Revolution is the very topic for a person of this character. It is eminently an unimpassioned movement. It requires no appreciation of the Cavalier or of the zealot; no sympathy with the romance of this world, no inclination to pass beyond, and absorb the mind's energies in another. It had neither the rough enthusiasm of barbarism nor the delicate grace of high civilization. The men who conducted it had neither the deep spirit of Cromwell's Puritans nor the chivalric loyalty of the enjoying English gentlemen. They were hard-headed, sensible men, who knew that politics were a kind of business, that the essence of business is compromise, of practicality concession. They drove no theory to excess, for they had no theory. Their passions did not hurry them away, for their temperament was still, their reason calculating and calm. Locke is the type of the best character of his era. There is nothing in him which a historian such as we have described could fail to comprehend, or could not sympathize with when he did comprehend. He was the very reverse of a Cavalier; he came of a Puritan stock;

he retained through life a kind of chilled Puritanism ; he had nothing of its excessive, overpowering, interior zeal, but he retained the formal decorum which it had given to the manners, the solid earnestness of its intellect, the heavy respectability of its character. In all the nations across which Puritanism has passed you may notice something of its indifference to this world's lighter enjoyments ; no one of them has been quite able to retain its singular interest in what is beyond the veil of time and sense. The generation to which we owe our Revolution was in the first stage of the descent. Locke thought a zealot a dangerous person, and a poet little better than a rascal. It has been said, with perhaps an allusion to Macaulay, that our historians have held that " all the people who lived before 1688 were either knaves or fools." This is, of course, an exaggeration ; but those who have considered what sort of a person a historian is likely to be, will not be surprised at his preference for the people of that era. They had the equable sense which he appreciates ; they had not the deep animated passions to which his nature is insensible.

Yet, though Macaulay shares in the common temperament of historians, and in the sympathy with, and appreciation of, the characters most congenial to that temperament, he is singularly contrasted with them in one respect—he has a vivid fancy, they have a dull one. History is generally written on the principle that human life is a transaction ; that people come to it with defined intentions and a calm self-possessed air, as stockjobbers would buy " omnium," as timber-merchants buy " best-middling " ; people are alike, and things are alike ; everything is a little dull, every one a little slow ; manners are not depicted, traits are not noticed ; the narrative is confined to those great transactions which can be understood without any imaginative delineation of their accompaniments. There are two kinds of things—those which you need only to *understand*, and

those which you need also to *imagine*. That a man bought nine hundredweight of hops is an intelligible idea—you do not want the hops delineated or the man described, that he went into society suggests an inquiry—you want to know what the society was like, and how far he was fitted to be there. The great business transactions of the political world are of the intelligible description. Macaulay has himself said :

“ A history, in which every particular incident may be true, may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity,—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the undercurrent flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favourites, but we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system ” \*

But of this sluggishness of imagination he has certainly no trace himself. He is willing to be “ behind ten thousand counters,” to be a guest “ at ten thousand firesides ” He is willing to see “ ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business and in their ordinary pleasures.” He has no objection to “ mingle in the crowds of the Exchange and the coffee-house.” He

\* From “History” All the other quotations on the next page  
are from the same source

would "obtain admittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth." So far as his dignity will permit, "he will bear with vulgar expressions." And a singular efficacy of fancy gives him the power to do so. Some portion of the essence of human nature is concealed from him; but all its accessories are at his command. He delineates any trait, he can paint, and justly paint, any manners he chooses.

"A perfect historian," he tells us, "is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony; but, by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed—some transactions are prominent, others retire, but the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate; but he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line. If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes, but with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in

the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government, and the history of the people, would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in *Old Mortality*; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel* " "

So far as the graphic description of exterior life goes, he has completely realized his idea

This union of a flowing fancy with an insensible organization is very rare. In general, a delicate fancy is joined with a poetic organization. Exactly why, it would be difficult to explain. It is for metaphysicians in large volumes to explain the genesis of the human faculties, but, as a fact, it seems to be clear that, for the most part, imaginative men are the most sensitive to the poetic side of human life and natural scenery. They are drawn by a strong instinct to what is sublime, grand, and beautiful. They do not care for the coarse business of life. They dislike to be cursed with its ordinary cares. Their nature is vivid; it is interested by all which naturally interests; it dwells on the great, the graceful, and the grand. On this account it naturally runs away from history. The very name of it is too oppressive. Are not all such works written in the *Index Expurgatorius* of the genial satirist as works which it was impossible to read? † The coarse and cumbrous matter revolts the soul of the fine and fanciful voluptuary. Take it as you will, human life is like

\* Essay on "History"

† Lamb *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*

the earth on which man dwells. There are exquisite beauties, grand imposing objects, scattered here and there; but the spaces between these are wide; the mass of common clay is huge, the dead level of vacant life, of commonplace geography, is immense. The poetic nature cannot bear the preponderance; it seeks relief in selected scenes, in special topics, in favourite beauties. History, which is the record of human existence, is a faithful representative of it, at least in this: the poetic mind cannot bear the weight of its narrations and the commonplaceness of its events.

This peculiarity of character gives to Macaulay's writing one of its most curious characteristics. He throws over matters which are in their nature dry and dull,—transactions—budgets—bills,—the charm of fancy which a poetical mind employs to enhance and set forth the charm of what is beautiful. An attractive style is generally devoted to what is in itself specially attractive, here it is devoted to subjects which are often unattractive, are sometimes even repelling, at the best are commonly neutral, not inviting attention, if they do not excite dislike. In these new volumes there is a currency reform, pages on Scotch Presbyterianism, a heap of Parliamentary debates. Who could be expected to make anything interesting of such topics? It is not cheerful to read in the morning papers the debates of yesterday, though they happened last night, we cannot like a Calvinistic divine when we see him in the pulpit, it is awful to read on the currency, even when it concerns the bank-notes which we use. How, then, can we care for a narrative when the divine is dead, the shillings extinct, the whole topic of the debate forgotten and passed away? Yet such is the power of style, so great is the charm of very skilful words, of narration which is always passing forward, of illustration which always hits the mark, that such subjects as these not only become interesting, but very interesting. The proof is evident. No book is so sought after. The

Chancellor of the Exchequer said "all members of Parliament had read it" What other books could ever be fancied to have been read by them? A county member—a real county member—hardly reads two volumes *per existence*. Years ago Macaulay said a History of England might become more in demand at the circulating libraries than the last novel. He has actually made his words true. It is no longer a phrase of rhetoric, it is a simple fact.

The explanation of this remarkable notoriety is, the contrast of the topic and the treatment. Those who read for the sake of entertainment are attracted by the one, those who read for the sake of instruction are attracted by the other. Macaulay has something that suits the readers of Mr. Hallam; he has something which will please the readers of Mr. Thackeray. The first wonder to find themselves reading such a style; the last are astonished at reading on such topics—at finding themselves studying by casualty. This marks the author. Only a buoyant fancy and an impassive temperament could produce a book so combining weight with levity.

Something similar may be remarked of the writings of a still greater man—of Edmund Burke. The contrast between the manner of his characteristic writings and their matter is very remarkable. He too threw over the detail of business and of politics those graces and attractions of manner which seem in some sort inconsistent with them, which are adapted for topics more intrinsically sublime and beautiful. It was for this reason that Hazlitt asserted that "no woman ever cared for Burke's writings" The matter, he said, was "hard and dry," and no superficial glitter of eloquence could make it agreeable to those who liked what is, in its very nature, fine and delicate. The charm of exquisite narration has, in a great degree, in Macaulay's case, supplied the deficiency; but it may be *perhaps* remarked, that some trace of the same phenomenon

has again occurred, from similar causes, and that his popularity, though great among both sexes, is in some sense more masculine than feminine. The absence of this charm of narration, to which accomplished women are, it would seem, peculiarly sensitive, is very characteristic of Burke. His mind was the reverse of historical. Although he had rather a coarse, incondite temperament, not finely susceptible to the best influences, to the most exquisite beauties of the world in which he lived, he yet lived in that world thoroughly and completely. He did not take an interest, as a poet does, in the sublime, because it is sublime, in the beautiful, because it is beautiful ; but he had the passions of more ordinary men in a degree, and of an intensity, which ordinary men may be most thankful that they have not. In no one has the intense faculty of intellectual hatred—the hatred which the absolute dogmatist has for those in whom he incarnates and personifies the opposing dogma—been fiercer or stronger ; in no one has the intense ambition to rule and govern,—in scarcely any one has the daily ambition of the daily politician been fiercer and stronger : he, if any man, cast himself upon his time. After one of his speeches, peruse one of Macaulay's : you seem transported to another sphere. The fierce living interest of the one contrasts with the cold rhetorical interest of the other ; you are in a different part of the animal kingdom ; you have left the viviparous intellect ; you have left products warm and struggling with hasty life ; you have reached the oviparous, and products smooth and polished, cold and stately.

In addition to this impassive nature, inclining him to write on past transactions—to this fancy, enabling him to adorn and describe them—Macaulay has a marvellous memory to recall them ; and what we may call the Scotch intellect, enabling him to conceive them. The memory is his most obvious power. An enormous reading seems always present to him. No effort seems

wanted—no mental excogitation. According to his own description of a like faculty, “it would have been strange indeed if you had asked for anything that was not to be found in that immense storehouse. The article you required was not only there, it was ready. It was in its own compartment. In a moment it was brought down, unpacked, and explained”<sup>1</sup> He has a literary illustration for everything; and his fancy enables him to make a skilful use of his wealth. He always selects the exact likeness of the idea which he wishes to explain. And though it be less obvious, yet his writing would have been deficient in one of its most essential characteristics if it had not been for what we have called his Scotch intellect, which is a curious matter to explain. It may be thought that Adam Smith had little in common with Sir Walter Scott. Sir Walter was always making fun of him, telling odd tales of his abstraction and singularity, not obscurely hinting, that a man who could hardly put on his own coat, and certainly could not buy his own dinner, was scarcely fit to decide on the proper course of industry and the mercantile dealings of nations. Yet, when Sir Walter’s own works come to be closely examined, they will be found to contain a good deal of political economy of a certain sort,—and not a very bad sort. Any one who will study his description of the Highland clans in *Waverley*; his observations on the industrial side (if so it is to be called) of the Border-life; his plans for dealing with the poor of his own time,—will be struck not only with a plain sagacity, which we could equal in England, but with the digested accuracy and theoretical completeness which they show. You might cut paragraphs, even from his lighter writings, which would be thought acute in the *Wealth of Nations*. There appears to be in the genius of the Scotch people—fostered, no doubt, by the abstract metaphysical

\* Essay on “Sir James Mackintosh”

education of their Universities, but also, by way of natural taste, supporting that education, and rendering it possible and popular—a power of reducing human actions to formulæ or principles. An instance is now in a high place. People who are not lawyers,—rural people, who have sense of their own, but have no access to the general repute and opinion which expresses the collective sense of the great world,—never can be brought to believe that Lord Campbell is a great man. They read his speeches in the House of Lords—his occasional flights of eloquence on the Bench—his attempts at pathos—his stupendous *gaucheries*—and they cannot be persuaded that a person guilty of such things can have really first-rate talent. If you ask them how he came to be Chief Justice of England, they mutter something angry, and say, “Well, Scotchmen *do* get on somehow.” This is really the true explanation. In spite of a hundred defects, Lord Campbell has the Scotch faculties in perfection. He reduces legal matters to a sound broad principle better than any man who is now a judge. He has a steady, comprehensive, abstract, distinct consistency, which elaborates a formula and adheres to a formula; and it is this which has raised him from a plain—a very plain—Scotch lawyer to be Lord Chief Justice of England. Macaulay has this too. Among his more brilliant qualities, it has escaped the attention of critics; the more so, because his powers of exposition and expression make it impossible to conceive for a moment that the amusing matter we are reading is really Scotch economy.

“During the interval,” he tells us, “between the Restoration and the Revolution, the riches of the nation had been rapidly increasing. Thousands of busy men found every Christmas that, after the expenses of the year’s housekeeping had been defrayed out of the year’s income, a surplus remained, and how that surplus was to be employed was a question of some difficulty. In our time, to invest such a surplus, at something more than

three per cent, on the best security that has ever been known in the world, is the work of a few minutes. But in the seventeenth century, a lawyer, a physician, a retired merchant, who had saved some thousands, and who wished to place them safely and profitably, was often greatly embarrassed. Three generations earlier, a man who had accumulated wealth in a profession generally purchased real property, or lent his savings on mortgage. But the number of acres in the kingdom had remained the same, and the value of those acres, though it had greatly increased, had by no means increased so fast as the quantity of capital which was seeking for employment. Many, too, wished to put their money where they could find it at an hour's notice, and looked about for some species of property which could be more readily transferred than a house or a field. A capitalist might lend on bottomry or on personal security, but, if he did so, he ran a great risk of losing interest and principal. There were a few joint-stock companies, among which the East India Company held the foremost place, but the demand for the stock of such companies was far greater than the supply. Indeed, the cry for a new East India Company was chiefly raised by persons who had found difficulty in placing their savings at interest on good security. So great was that difficulty, that the practice of hoarding was common. We are told that the father of Pope, the poet, who retired from business in the City about the time of the Revolution, carried to a retreat in the country a strong box containing nearly twenty thousand pounds, and took out from time to time what was required for household expenses, and it is highly probable that this was not a solitary case. At present, the quantity of coin which is hoarded by private persons is so small, that it would, if brought forth, make no perceptible addition to the circulation. But, in the earlier part of the reign of William the Third, all the greatest writers on currency were of opinion that a very considerable mass of gold and silver was hidden in secret drawers and behind wainscots.

"The natural effect of this state of things was, that a crowd of projectors, ingenious and absurd, honest and knavish, employed themselves in devising new schemes for the employment of redundant capital. It was about the year 1688 that the word stockjobber was first heard in

London. In the short space of four years a crowd of companies, every one of which confidently held out to subscribers the hope of immense gains, sprang into existence: the Insurance Company, the Paper Company, the Lutestring Company, the Pearl-Fishery Company, the Glass-Bottle Company, the Alum Company, the Blythe Coal Company, the Swordblade Company. There was a Tapestry Company, which would soon furnish pretty hangings for all the parlours of the middle class and for all the bedchambers of the higher. There was a Copper Company, which proposed to explore the mines of England, and held out a hope that they would prove not less valuable than those of Potosi. There was a Diving Company, which undertook to bring up precious effects from shipwrecked vessels, and which announced that it had laid in a stock of wonderful machines, resembling complete suits of armour. In front of the helmet was a huge glass eye, like that of a Cyclop; and out of the crest went a pipe, through which the air was to be admitted. The whole process was exhibited on the Thames. Fine gentlemen and fine ladies were invited to the show, were hospitably regaled, and were delighted by seeing the divers in their panoply descend into the river, and return laden with old iron and ship's tackle. There was a Greenland Fishing Company, which could not fail to drive the Dutch whalers and herring-busses out of the Northern Ocean. There was a Tanning Company, which promised to furnish leather superior to the best that was brought from Turkey or Russia. There was a society which undertook the office of giving gentlemen a liberal education on low terms, and which assumed the sounding name of the Royal Academies Company. In a pompous advertisement it was announced that the directors of the Royal Academies Company had engaged the best masters in every branch of knowledge, and were about to issue twenty thousand tickets at twenty shillings each. There was to be a lottery: two thousand prizes were to be drawn, and the fortunate holders of the prizes were to be taught, at the charge of the Company, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, conic sections, trigonometry, heraldry, japanning, fortification, book-keeping, and the art of playing the theorbo. Some of these companies took large mansions, and printed their advertisements in gilded letters. Others, less ostentatious, were content with ink,

and met at coffee-houses in the neighbourhood of the Royal Exchange Jonathan's and Garraway's were in a constant ferment with brokers, buyers, sellers, meetings of directors, meetings of proprietors. Time-bargains soon came into fashion. Extensive combinations were formed, and monstrous fables were circulated, for the purpose of raising or depressing the price of shares. Our country witnessed for the first time those phenomena with which a long experience has made us familiar. A mania, of which the symptoms were essentially the same with those of the mania of 1720, of the mania of 1825, of the mania of 1845, seized the public mind. An impatience to be rich, a contempt for those slow but sure gains which are the proper reward of industry, patience, and thrift, spread through society. The spirit of the cogging diceis at Whitefriars took possession of the grave senators of the City, wardens of trades, deputies, aldermen. It was much easier and much more lucrative to put forth a lying prospectus announcing a new stock, to persuade ignorant people that the dividends could not fall short of twenty per cent, and to part with five thousand pounds of this imaginary wealth for ten thousand solid guineas, than to load a ship with a well-chosen cargo for Virginia or the Levant. Every day some new bubble was puffed into existence, rose buoyant, shone bright, burst, and was forgotten." \*

You will not find the cause of panics so accurately explained in the dryest of political economists—in the Scotch M'Culloch

These peculiarities of character and mind may be very conspicuously traced through the *History of England*, and in the *Essays*. Their first and most striking quality is the *intellectual entertainment* which they afford. This, as practical readers know, is a kind of sensation which is not very common, and which is very productive of great and healthy enjoyment. It is quite distinct from the amusement which is derived from common light works. The latter is very great; but it is passive. The mind of the reader is not awakened

\* *History of England*, chap. xix

to any independent action ; you see the farce, but you see it without effort ; not simply without painful effort, but without any perceptible mental activity whatever. Again, entertainment of intellect is contrasted with the high enjoyment of consciously following pure and difficult reasoning ; such a sensation is a sort of sublimated pain. The highest and most intense action of the intellectual powers is like the most intense action of the bodily on a high mountain. We climb and climb : we have a thrill of pleasure, but we have also a sense of effort and anguish. Nor is the sensation to be confounded with that which we experience from the best and purest works of art. The pleasure of high tragedy is also painful : the whole soul is stretched ; the spirit pants ; the passions scarcely breathe . it is a rapt and eager moment, too intense for continuance—so overpowering, that we scarcely know whether it be joy or pain. The sensation of intellectual entertainment is altogether distinguished from these by not being accompanied by any pain, and yet being consequent on, or being contemporaneous with, a high and constant exercise of mind. While we read works which so delight us, we are conscious that we are delighted, and are conscious that we are not idle. The opposite pleasures of indolence and exertion seem for a moment combined. A sort of elasticity pervades us ; thoughts come easily and quickly ; we seem capable of many ideas ; we follow cleverness till we fancy that we are clever. This feeling is only given by writers who stimulate the mind just to the degree which is pleasant, and who do not stimulate it more , who exact a moderate exercise of mind, and who seduce us to it insensibly. This can only be, of course, by a charm of style , by the inexplicable *je ne sais quoi* which attracts our attention , by constantly raising and constantly satisfying our curiosity. And there seems to be a further condition. A writer who wishes to produce this constant effect must not appeal to any single, separate faculty of mind, but to the

whole mind at once. The fancy tires, if you appeal only to the fancy ; the understanding is aware of its dullness, if you appeal only to the understanding ; the curiosity is soon satiated, unless you pique it with variety. This is the very opportunity for Macaulay. He has fancy, sense, abundance, he appeals to both fancy and understanding. There is no sense of effort. His books read like an elastic dream. There is a continual sense of instruction ; for who had an idea of the transactions before ? The emotions, too, which he appeals to are the easy admiration, the cool disapprobation, the gentle worldly curiosity, which quietly excite us, never fatigue us,—which we could bear for ever. To read Macaulay for a day, would be to pass a day of easy thought, of pleasant placid emotion.

Nor is this a small matter. In a state of high civilization it is no simple matter to give multitudes a large and healthy enjoyment. The old bodily enjoyments are dying out, there is no room for them any more ; the complex apparatus of civilization cumbers the ground. We are thrown back upon the mind, and the mind is a barren thing. It can spin little from itself : few that describe what they see are in the way to discern much. Exaggerated emotions, violent incidents, monstrous characters, crowd our canvas, they are the resource of a weakness which would obtain the fame of strength. Reading is about to become a series of collisions against aggravated breakers, of beatings with imaginary surf. In such times a book of sensible attraction is a public benefit ; it diffuses a sensation of vigour through the multitude. Perhaps there is a danger that the extreme popularity of the manner may make many persons fancy they understand the matter more perfectly than they do : some readers may become conceited ; several boys believe that they too are Macaulays. Yet, duly allowing for this defect, it is a great good that so many people should learn so much on such topics so agreeably ; that they should feel that

thay *can* understand them ; that their minds should be stimulated by a consciousness of health and power.

The same peculiarities influence the style of the narrative. The art of narration is the art of writing in hooks-and-eyes. The principle consists in making the appropriate thought follow the appropriate thought, the proper fact the proper fact ; in first preparing the mind for what is to come, and then letting it come. This can only be achieved by keeping continually and insensibly before the mind of the reader some one object, character, or image, whose variations are the events of the story, whose unity is the unity of it. Scott, for example, keeps before you the mind of some one person, —that of Morton in *Old Mortality*, of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*, of Lovel in *The Antiquary*,—whose fortunes and mental changes are the central incidents, whose personality is the string of unity. It is the defect of the great Scotch novels that their central figure is frequently not their most interesting topic,—that their interest is often rather in the accessories than in the essential principle, rather in that which surrounds the centre of narration than in the centre itself. Scott tries to meet this objection by varying the mind which he selects for his unit, in one of his chapters it is one character, in the next a different, he shifts the scene from the hero to the heroine, from the “Protector of the settlement” of the story to the evil being who mars it perpetually : but when narrowly examined, the principle of his narration will be found nearly always the same,—the changes in the position—external or mental—of some one human being. The most curiously opposite sort of narration is that of Hume. He seems to carry a *view*, as the moderns call it, through everything. He forms to himself a metaphysical—that perhaps is a harsh word—an intellectual conception of the time and character before him, and the gradual working out or development of that view is the principle of his narration. He tells the story of the conception. You rise from his

pages without much remembrance of or regard for the mere people, but with a clear notion of an elaborated view, skilfully abstracted and palpably impress'd upon you. A critic of detail should surely require a better task than to show how insensibly and artfully the subtle historian infuses his doctrine among the facts. It indicates somehow—you can scarcely say how—<sup>1</sup> their relation to it, strings them, as it were, upon it, concealing it in seeming beneath them, while in fact it always does determine their form, their grouping, and their consistency. The style of Macaulay is very different from either of these. It is a diorama of political pictures. You seem to begin with a brilliant picture—its colours are distinct, its lines are firm, on a sudden it changes at first gradually, you can scarcely tell how or in what, but truly and unmistakably,—a slightly different picture is before you; then the second vision seems to change, —it too is another and yet the same, then the third shines forth and fades, and so without end. The unity of this delineation is the identity—the apparent identity—of the picture; in no two moments does it seem quite different, in no two is it identically the same. It grows and alters as our bodies would appear to alter and grow, if you could fancy any one watching them, and being conscious of their daily little changes. The events are picturesque variations, the unity is a unity of political painting, of represented external form. It is evident how suitable this is to a writer whose understanding is solid, whose sense is political, whose fancy is fine and delineative.

To this merit of Macaulay is to be added another. No one describes so well what we may call the *spectacle* of a character. The art of delineating character by protracted description is one which grows in spite of the critics. In vain is it alleged that the character should be shown dramatically; that it should be illustrated by events; that it should be exhibited in its actions. The truth is, that these homilies are excellent, but

incomplete ; true, but out of season. There is a utility in verbal portrait, as Lord Stanhope says there is in painted. Goethe used to observe, that in society—in a *tête-à-tête*, rather—you often thought of your companion as if he was his portrait : you were silent, you did not care what he said ; but you considered him as a picture, as a whole, especially as regards yourself and your relations towards him.\* You require something of the same kind in literature ; *some* description of a man is clearly necessary as an introduction to the story of his life and actions. But more than this is wanted ; you require to have the object placed before you as a whole, to have the characteristic traits mentioned, the delicate qualities drawn out, the firm features gently depicted. As the practice which Goethe hints at is, of all others, the most favourable to a just and calm judgment of character, so the literary substitute is essential as a steadyng element, as a summary, to bring together and give a unity to our views. We must see the man's face. Without it, we seem to have heard a great deal about the person, but not to have known him ; to be aware that he had done a good deal, but to have no settled, ineradicable notion what manner of man he was. This is the reason why critics like Macaulay, who sneer at the practice when estimating the work of others, yet make use of it at great length, and, in his case, with great skill, when they come to be historians themselves. The kind of characters whom Macaulay can describe is limited—at least we think so—by the bounds which we indicated just now. There are some men whom he is too impassive to comprehend, but he can always tell us of such as he does comprehend, what they looked like, and what they were.

A great deal of this vividness Macaulay of course owes to his style. Of its effectiveness there can be no doubt ; its agreeableness no one who has just been

\* *Elective Affinities*, part II, chap. ii

reading it is likely to deny Yet it has a defect. It is not, as Bishop Butler would have expressed it, such a style as "is suitable to such a being as man, in such a world as the present one" It is too omniscient Everything is too plain All is clear ; nothing is doubtful Instead of probability being, as the great thinker expressed it, "the very guide of life," it has become a rare exception—an uncommon phenomenon You rarely come across anything, which is not decided ; and when you do come across it, you seem to wonder that the positiveness, which has accomplished so much, should have been unwilling to decide everything. This is hardly the style for history. The data of historical narratives, especially of modern histories, are a heap of confusion No one can tell where they lie, or where they do not lie, what is in them, or what is not in them Literature is called the "fragment of fragments", little has been written, and but little of that little has been preserved So history is a vestige of vestiges, few facts leave any trace of themselves, any witness of their occurrence ; of fewer still is that witness preserved, a slight track is all anything leaves, and the confusion of life, the tumult of change, sweeps even that away in a moment It is not possible that these data can be very fertile in certainties Few people would make anything of them : a memoir here, a MS there—two letters in a magazine—an assertion by a person whose veracity is denied,—these are the sort of evidence out of which a flowing narrative is to be educed, and of course it ought not to be too flowing " If you please, sir, tell me what you do *not* know," was the inquiry of a humble pupil addressed to a great man of science It would have been a relief to the readers of Macaulay if he had shown a little the outside of uncertainties, which there must be—the gradations of doubt, which there ought to be—the singular accumula-

\* Introduction to *Butler's Analogy*.

tion of difficulties, which must beset the extraction of a very easy narrative from very confused materials.

This defect in style is, indeed, indicative of a defect in understanding. Macaulay's mind is eminently gifted, but there is a want of graduation in it. He has a fine eye for probabilities, a clear perception of evidence, a shrewd guess at missing links of fact; but each probability seems to him a certainty, each piece of evidence conclusive, each analogy exact. The heavy Scotch intellect is a little prone to this: one figures it as a heap of formulæ, and if fact *b* is reducible to formula *B*, that is all which it regards, the mathematical mill grinds with equal energy at flour perfect and imperfect—at matter which is quite certain and at matter which is only a little probable. But the great cause of this error is, an abstinence from practical action. Life is a school of probability. In the writings of every man of patient practicality, in the midst of whatever other defects, you will find a careful appreciation of the degrees of likelihood; a steady balancing of them one against another; a disinclination to make things too clear, to overlook the debit side of the account in mere contemplation of the enormousness of the credit. The reason is obvious. action is a business of risk, the real question is the magnitude of that risk. Failure is ever impending; success is ever uncertain, there is always, in the very best of affairs, a slight probability of the former, a contingent possibility of the non-occurrence of the latter. For practical men, the problem ever is to test the amount of these inevitable probabilities, to make sure that no one increases too far; that by a well-varied choice the number of risks may in itself be a protection—be an insurance to you, as it were, against the capricious result of any one. A man like Macaulay, who stands aloof from life, is not so instructed; he sits secure: nothing happens in his study, he does not care to test probabilities, he loses the detective sensation.

Macaulay's so-called inaccuracy is likewise a phase of this defect. Considering the enormous advantages which a picturesque style gives to ill-disposed critics; the number of points of investigation which it suggests; the number of assertions it makes, sentence by sentence; the number of ill-disposed critics that there are in the world; remembering Macaulay's position--set on a hill to be spied at by them—he can scarcely be thought an inaccurate historian. Considering all things, they have found few certain blunders, hardly any direct mistakes. Every sentence of his style requires minute knowledge; the vivid picture has a hundred details, each of those details must have an evidence, an authority, a proof. A historian like Hume passes easily over a period, his chart is large; if he gets the conspicuous headlands the large harbours duly marked, he does not care. Macaulay puts in the depth of each wave, every remarkable rock, every tree on the shore. Nothing gives a critic so great an advantage. It is difficult to do this for a volume, simple for a page. It is easy to select a particular event, and learn all which any one can know about it, examine Macaulay's descriptions, say he is wrong, that X is not buried where he asserts, that a little boy was one year older than he states. But how would the critic manage, if he had to work out all this for a million facts, for a whole period? Few men, we suspect, would be able to make so few errors of simple and provable fact. On the other hand, few men would arouse a sleepy critic by such startling assertion. If Macaulay finds a new theory, he states it as a fact. Very likely it really is the most probable theory, at any rate, we know of no case in which his theory is not one among the most plausible. If it had only been so stated, it would have been well received. His view of Marlborough's character, for instance, is a specious one, it has a good deal of evidence, a large amount of real probability, but it has scarcely more. Marlborough *may* have been as bad as is said, but we can hardly be *sure* of it at this time.

Macaulay's "party-spirit" is another consequence of his positiveness. When he inclines to a side, he inclines to it too much. His opinions are a shade too strong; his predilections some degrees at least too warm. William is too perfect, James too imperfect. The Whigs are a trifle like angels, the Tories like, let us say, "our inferiors." Yet this is evidently an honest party-spirit. It does not lurk in the corners of sentences; it is not insinuated without being alleged, it does not, like the unfairness of Hume, secrete itself so subtly in the turns of the words, that when you look to prove it, it is gone. On the contrary, it rushes into broad day. William is loaded with panegyric, James is always spoken evil of. Hume's is the artful pleading of a hired advocate, Macaulay's the bold eulogy of a sincere friend. As far as effect goes, this is an error. The very earnestness of the affection leads to a reaction; we are tired of having William called the "just"; we cannot believe so many pages, "all that" can scarcely be correct. As we said, if the historian's preference for persons and parties had been duly tempered and mitigated, if the probably good were only said to be probably good, if the rather bad were only alleged to be rather bad, the reader would have been convinced, and the historian would have escaped the savage censure of envious critics.

The one thing which detracts from the pleasure of reading these volumes, is the doubt whether they should have been written. Should not these great powers be reserved for great periods? Is this abounding, picturesque style suited for continuous history? Are small men to be so largely described? Should not admirable delineation be kept for admirable people? We think so. You do not want Raphael to paint sign-posts, or Palladio to build dirt-pies. Much of history is necessarily of little value,—the superficies of circumstance, the scum of events. It is very well to have it described, indeed you must have it described;

the chain must be kept complete ; the narrative of a country's fortunes will not allow of breaks or gaps. Yet all things need not be done equally well. The life of a great painter is short. Even the industry of Macaulay will not complete this history. It is a pity to spend such powers on such events. It would have been better to have some new volumes of essays solely on great men and great things. The diffuseness of the style would have been then in place, we could have borne to hear the smallest *minutiæ* of magnificent epochs. If an inferior hand had executed the connecting links, our notions would have acquired an insensible perspective ; the works of the great artist, the best themes, would have stood out from the canvas. They are now confused by the equal brilliancy of the adjacent inferiorities.

Much more might be said on this narrative. As it will be read for very many years, it will employ the critics for very many years. It would be unkind to make all the best observations. Something, as Mr Disraeli said in a Budget speech, something should be left for " future statements of this nature ". There will be an opportunity. Whatever those who come after may say against this book, it will be, and remain, the " Pictorial History of England ".

## THE WAVERLEY NOVELS\*

(1858)

IT is not commonly on the generation which was contemporary with the production of great works of art that they exercise their most magical influence. Nor is it on the distant people whom we call posterity. Contemporaries bring to new books formed minds and stiffened creeds ; posterity, if it regard them at all, looks at them as old subjects, worn-out topics, and hears a disputation on their merits with languid impartiality, like aged judges in a court of appeal. Even standard authors exercise but slender influence on the susceptible minds of a rising generation ; they are become “papa’s books” ; the walls of the library are adorned with their regular volumes ; but no hand touches them. Their fame is itself half an obstacle to their popularity ; a delicate fancy shrinks from employing so great a celebrity as the companion of an idle hour. The generation which is really most influenced by a work of genius is commonly that which is still young when the first controversy respecting its merits arises ; with the

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eagerness of youth they read and re-read, their vanity is not unwilling to adjudicate. in the process their imagination is formed; the creations of the author range themselves in the memory; they become part of the substance of the very mind. The works of Sir Walter Scott can hardly be said to have gone through this exact process. Their immediate popularity was unbounded. No one—a few most captious critics apart—ever questioned their peculiar power. Still they are subject to a transition, which is in principle the same. At the time of their publication mature contemporaries read them with delight. Superficial the reading of grown men in some sort must be; it is only once in a lifetime that we can know the passionate reading of youth, men soon lose its eager learning power. But from peculiarities in their structure, which we shall try to indicate, the novels of Scott suffered less than almost any book of equal excellence from this inevitable superficiality of perusal. Their plain, and, so to say, cheerful merits suit the occupied man of genial middle life. Their appreciation was to an unusual degree coincident with their popularity. The next generation, hearing the praises of their fathers in their earliest reading time, seized with avidity on the volumes, and there is much in very many of them which is admirably fitted for the delight of boyhood. A third generation has now risen into at least the commencement of literary life, which is quite removed from the unbounded enthusiasm with which the Scotch novels were originally received, and does not always share the still more eager partiality of those who, in the opening of their minds, first received the tradition of their excellence. New books have arisen to compete with these, new interests distract us from them. The time, therefore, is not perhaps unfavourable for a slight criticism of these celebrated fictions; and their continual republication without any criticism for many years, seems almost to demand it.

There are two kinds of fiction which, though in common literature they may run very much into one another, are yet in reality distinguishable and separate. One of these, which we may call the *ubiquitous*, aims at describing the whole of human life in all its spheres, in all its aspects, with all its varied interests, aims, and objects. It searches through the whole life of man ; his practical pursuits, his speculative attempts, his romantic youth, and his domestic age. It gives an entire picture of all these ; or if there be any lineaments which it forbears to depict, they are only such as the inevitable repression of a regulated society excludes from the admitted province of literary art. Of this kind are the novels of Cervantes and Le Sage, and, to a certain extent, of Smollett or Fielding. In our own time, Mr. Dickens is an author whom Nature intended to write to a certain extent with this aim. He should have given us *not* disjointed novels, with a vague attempt at a romantic plot, but sketches of diversified scenes, and the obvious life of varied mankind. The literary fates, however, if such beings there are, allotted otherwise. By a very terrible example of the way in which in this world great interests are postponed to little ones, the genius of authors is habitually sacrificed to the tastes of readers. In this age, the great readers of fiction are young people. The "addiction" of these is to romance, and accordingly a kind of novel has become so familiar to us as almost to engross the name, which deals solely with the passion of love ; and if it uses other parts of human life for the occasions of its art, it does so only cursorily and occasionally, and with a view of throwing into a stronger or more delicate light those sentimental parts of earthly affairs which are the special objects of delineation. All prolonged delineation of other parts of human life is considered "dry," stupid, and distracts the mind of the youthful generation from the "fantasies" which peculiarly charm it. Mr. Olmstead has a story of some deputation of the

Indians, at which the American orator harangued the barbarian audience about the "great spirit," and "the land of their fathers," in the style of Mr. Cooper's novels; during a moment's pause in the great stream, an old Indian asked the deputation: "Why does your chief speak thus to us? We did not wish great instruction or fine words; we desire brandy and tobacco." No critic in a time of competition will speak uncourteously of any reader of either sex, but it is indisputable that the old kind of novel, full of "great instruction" and varied pictures, does not afford to some young gentlemen and some young ladies either the peculiar stimulus or the peculiar solace which they desire.

The *Waverley* Novels were published at a time when the causes that thus limit the sphere of fiction were coming into operation, but when they had not yet become so omnipotent as they are now. Accordingly, these novels everywhere bear marks of a state of transition. They are not devoted with anything like the present exclusiveness to the sentimental part of human life. They describe great events, singular characters, strange accidents, strange states of society; they dwell with a peculiar interest—and as if for their own sake—on antiquarian details relating to a past society. Singular customs, social practices, even political institutions which existed once in Scotland, and elsewhere, during the Middle Ages, are explained with a careful minuteness. At the same time the sentimental element assumes a great deal of prominence. The book is in fact, as well as in theory, a narrative of the feelings and fortunes of the hero and heroine. An attempt more or less successful has been made to insert an interesting love-story in each novel. Sir Walter was quite aware that the best delineation of the oddest characters, or the most quaint societies, or the strangest incidents, would not in general satisfy his readers. He has invariably attempted an account of youthful, sometimes of decidedly juvenile, feelings and actions. The difference between

Sir Walter's novels and the specially romantic fictions of the present day is, that in the former the love-story is always, or nearly always, connected with some great event, or the fortunes of some great historical character, or the peculiar movements and incidents of some strange state of society ; and that the author did not suppose or expect that his readers would be so absorbed in the sentimental aspect of human life as to be unable or unwilling to be interested in, or to attend to, any other. There is always a *locus in quo*, if the expression may be pardoned, in the Waverley Novels. The hero and heroine walk among the trees of the forest according to rule, but we are expected to take an interest in the forest as well as in them.

No novel, therefore, of Sir Walter Scott's can be considered to come exactly within the class which we have called the ubiquitous. None of them in any material degree attempts to deal with human affairs in all their spheres—to delineate as a whole the life of man. The canvas has a large background, in some cases too large either for artistic effect or the common reader's interest ; but there are always real boundaries—Sir Walter had no *thesis* to maintain. Scarcely any writer will set himself to delineate the whole of human life, unless he has a doctrine concerning human life to put forth and inculcate. The effort is *doctrinaire*. Scott's imagination was strictly conservative. He could understand (with a few exceptions) any considerable movement of human life and action, and could always describe with easy freshness everything which he did understand ; but he was not obliged by stress of fanaticism to maintain a dogma concerning them, or to show their peculiar relation to the general sphere of life. He described vigorously and boldly the peculiar scene and society which in every novel he had selected as the theatre of romantic action. Partly from their fidelity to nature, and partly from a consistency in the artist's mode of representation, these pictures group themselves

from the several novels in the imagination, and an habitual reader comes to think of and understand what is meant by "Scott's world"; but the writer had no such distinct object before him. No one novel was designed to be a delineation of the world as Scott viewed it. We have vivid and fragmentary histories; it is for the slow critic of after-times to piece together their teaching.

From this intermediate position of the *Waverley* Novels, or at any rate in exact accordance with its requirements, is the special characteristic for which they are most remarkable. We may call this in a brief phrase their *romantic sense*, and perhaps we cannot better illustrate it than by a quotation from the novel to which the series owes its most usual name. It occurs in the description of the Court ball which Charles Edward is described as giving at Holyrood House the night before his march southward on his strange adventure. The striking interest of the scene before him, and the peculiar position of his own sentimental career, are described as influencing the mind of the hero.

"Under the influence of these mixed sensations, and cheered at times by a smile of intelligence and approbation from the Prince as he passed the group, *Waverley* exerted his powers of fancy, animation, and eloquence, and attracted the general admiration of the company. The conversation gradually assumed the line best qualified for the display of his talents and acquisitions. The gaiety of the evening was exalted in character, rather than checked, by the approaching dangers of the morrow. All nerves were strung for the future, and prepared to enjoy the present. This mood is highly favourable for the exercise of the powers of imagination, for poetry, and for that eloquence which is allied to poetry,"\*

Neither "eloquence" nor "poetry" are the exact words with which it would be appropriate to describe the fresh style of the *Waverley* Novels, but the imagina-

tion of their author was stimulated by a fancied mixture of sentiment and fact, very much as he describes Waverley's to have been by a real experience of the two at once. The second volume of *Waverley* is one of the most striking illustrations of this peculiarity. The character of Charles Edward, his adventurous undertaking, his ancestral rights, the mixed selfishness and enthusiasm of the Highland chiefs, the fidelity of their hereditary followers, their striking and strange array, the contrast with the Baron of Bradwardine and the Lowland gentry ; the collision of the motley and half-appointed host with the formed and finished English society, its passage by the Cumberland mountains and the blue lake of Ullswater—are unceasingly and without effort present to the mind of the writer, and incite with their historical interest the susceptibility of his imagination. But at the same time the mental struggle, or rather transition, in the mind of Waverley—for his mind was of the faint order which scarcely struggles—is never for an instant lost sight of. In the very midst of the inroad and the conflict, the acquiescent placidity with which the hero exchanges the service of the imperious for the appreciation of the “ nice ” heroine, is kept before us, and the imagination of Scott wandered without effort from the great scene of martial affairs to the natural but rather unheroic sentiments of a young gentleman not very difficult to please. There is no trace of effort in the transition, as is so common in the inferior works of later copyists. Many historical novelists, especially those who with care and pains have “ read up ” their detail, are often evidently in a strait how to pass from their history to their sentiment. The fancy of Sir Walter could not help connecting the two. If he had given us the English side of the race to Derby, he would have described the Bank of England paying in sixpences, and also the loves of the cashier.

It is not unremarkable in connection with this, the special characteristic of the “ Scotch novels,” that their

author began his literary life by collecting the old ballads of his native country. Ballad poetry is, in comparison at least with many other kinds of poetry, a sensible thing. It describes not only romantic events, but historic ones, incidents in which there is a form and body and consistence—events which have a result. Such a poem as “Chevy Chace,” we need not explain, has its prosaic side. The latest historian of Greece\* has nowhere been more successful than in his attempt to derive from Homer, the greatest of ballad poets, a thorough and consistent account of the political working of the Homeric state of society. The early natural imagination of men seizes firmly on all which interests the minds and hearts of natural men. We find in its delineations the council as well as the marriage; the harsh conflict as well as the deep love-affair. Scott’s own poetry is essentially a modernized edition of the traditional poems which his early youth was occupied in collecting. The “Lady of the Lake” is a sort of *boudoir* ballad, yet it contains its elements of common sense and broad delineation. The exact position of Lowlander and Highlander would not be more aptly described in a set treatise than in the well-known lines.

“ Saxon, from yonder mountain high  
 I marked thee send delighted eye  
 Far to the south and east, where lay,  
 Extended in succession gay,  
 Deep waving fields and pastures green,  
 With gentle slopes and groves between.  
 These fertile plains, that softened vale,  
 Were once the birthright of the Gael  
 The stranger came with iron hand,  
 And from our fathers reft the land  
 Where dwell we now! See, rudely swell  
 Crag over crag, and fell o’er fell  
 Ask we this savage hill we tread,  
 For fattened steer or household bread ,

Ask we for flocks these shingles dry,—  
 And well the mountain might reply :  
 To you, as to your sires of yore,  
 Belong the target and claymore ;  
 I give you shelter in my breast,  
 Your own good blades must win the rest.  
 Pent in this fortress of the North,  
 Think'st thou we will not sally forth  
 To spoil the spoiler as we may,  
 And from the robber rend the prey ?  
 Ay, by my soul ! While on yon plain  
 The Saxon rears one shock of grain ,  
 While of ten thousand herds there strays  
 But one along yon river's maze ,  
 The Gael, of plain and river heir,  
 Shall with strong hand redeem his share ”

We need not search the same poem for specimens of the romantic element, for the whole poem is full of them. The incident in which Ellen discovers who Fitz-James really is, is perhaps excessively romantic. At any rate the lines,—

“ To him each lady's look was lent ;  
 On him each courtier's eye was bent ;  
 Midst furs and silks and jewels sheen,  
 He stood in simple Lincoln green,  
 The centre of the glittering ring,  
 And Snowdoun's knight is Scotland's king, ”—

may be cited as very sufficient example of the sort of sentimental incident which is separable from extreme feeling. When Scott, according to his own half-jesting but half-serious expression, was “ beaten out of poetry ” by Byron, he began to express in more pliable prose the same combination which his verse had been used to convey. As might have been expected, the sense became in the novels more free, vigorous, and flowing, because it is less cramped by the vehicle in which it is conveyed. The range of character which can be adequately delineated in narrative verse is much nar-

rower than that which can be described in the combination of narrative with dramatic prose, and perhaps even the sentiment of the novels is manlier and freer; a delicate unreality hovers over the "Lady of the Lake."

The sensible element, if we may so express it, of the Waverley Novels appears in various forms. One of the most striking is in the delineation of great political events and influential political institutions. We are not by any means about to contend that Scott is to be taken as an infallible or an impartial authority for the parts of history which he delineates. On the contrary, we believe all the world now agrees that there are many deductions to be made from, many exceptions to be taken to, the accuracy of his delineations. Still, whatever period or incident we take, we shall always find in the error a great, in one or two cases perhaps an extreme, mixture of the mental element which we term common-sense. The strongest *unsensible* feeling in Scott was perhaps his Jacobitism, which crept out even in small incidents and recurring prejudice throughout the whole of his active career, and was, so to say, the emotional aspect of his habitual Toryism. Yet no one can have given a more sensible delineation, we might say a more statesmanlike analysis, of the various causes which led to the momentary success, and to the speedy ruin, of the enterprise of Charles Edward.\* Mr. Lockhart says, that notwithstanding Scott's imaginative readiness to exalt Scotland at the expense of England, no man would have been more willing to join in emphatic opposition to an anti-English party, if any such had presented itself with a practical object. Similarly his Jacobitism, though not without moments of real influence, passed away when his mind was directed to broad masses of fact, and general conclusions of political reasoning. A similar observation may be

\* In *Waverley*

made as to Scott's Toryism ; although it is certain that there was an enthusiastic, and, in the malicious sense, poetical element in Scott's Toryism, yet quite as indisputably it partook largely of two other elements, which are in common repute prosaic. He shared abundantly in the love of administration and organization, common to all men of great active powers. He liked to contemplate method at work and order in action. Everybody hates to hear that the Duke of Wellington asked " how the king's government was to be carried on " No amount of warning wisdom will bear so fearful a repetition. Still he *did* say it, and Scott had a sympathizing foresight of the oracle before it was spoken. One element of his conservatism is his sympathy with the administrative arrangement, which is confused by the objections of a Whiggish opposition and is liable to be altogether destroyed by uprisings of the populace. His biographer, while pointing out the strong contrast between Scott and the argumentative and parliamentary statesmen of his age, avows his opinion that in other times, and with sufficient opportunities, Scott's ability in managing men would have enabled him to " play the part of Cecil or of Gondomar ".\* We may see how much a suppressed enthusiasm for such abilities breaks out, not only in the description of hereditary monarchs, where the sentiment might be ascribed to a different origin, but also in the delineation of upstart rulers, who could have no hereditary sanctity in the eyes of any Tory. Roland Græme, in *The Abbot*, is well described as losing in the presence of the Regent Murray the natural impertinence of his disposition. " He might have braved with indifference the presence of an earl merely distinguished by his belt and coronet ; but he felt overawed in that of the soldier and statesman, the wielder of a nation's power, and the leader of her

\* Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol v, chap viii, in re Scott's management of the Highland pageant on George IV's visit to Scotland (Forrest Morgan.)

armies" \* It is easy to perceive that the author shares the feeling of his hero by the evident pleasure with which he dwells on the regent's demeanour: "He then turned slowly round toward Roland Græme, and the marks of gaiety, real or assumed, disappeared from his countenance as completely as the passing bubbles leave the dark mirror of a still profound lake into which the traveller has cast a stone; in the course of a minute his noble features had assumed their natural expression of melancholy gravity," † etc. In real life, Scott used to say, that he never remembered feeling abashed in any one's presence except the Duke of Wellington's. Like that of the hero of his novel, his imagination was very susceptible to the influence of great achievements and prolonged success in wide-spreading affairs

The view which Scott seems to have taken of democracy indicates exactly the same sort of application of a plain sense to the visible parts of the subject. His imagination was singularly penetrated with the strange varieties and motley composition of human life. The extraordinary multitude and striking contrast of the characters in his novels show this at once. And even more strikingly is the same habit of mind indicated "by a tendency never to omit an opportunity of describing those varied crowds and assemblages" which concentrate for a moment into a unity the scattered and unlike varieties of mankind. Thus, but a page or two before the passage which we alluded to in *The Abbot*, we find the following:

"It was indeed no common sight to Roland, the vestibule of a palace, traversed by its various groups,—some radiant with gaiety—some pensive, and apparently weighed down by affairs concerning the State, or concerning themselves. Here the hoary statesman, with his cautious yet commanding look, his furred cloak and sable pantoufles; there the soldier in buff and steel, his long sword jarring against the

pavement, and his whiskered upper lip and frowning brow looking an habitual defiance of danger, which perhaps was not always made good ; there again passed my lord's serving-man, high of heart and bloody of hand, humble to his master and his master's equals, insolent to all others To these might be added the poor suitor, with his anxious look and depressed mien—the officer, full of his brief authority, elbowing his betters, and possibly his benefactors, out of the road—the proud priest, who sought a better benefice—the proud baron, who sought a grant of Church lands—the robber chief, who came to solicit a pardon for the injuries he had inflicted on his neighbours—the plundered franklin, who came to seek vengeance for that which he had himself received Besides, there was the mustering and disposition of guards and soldiers—the despatching of messengers, and the receiving them—the trampling and neighing of horses without the gate—the flashing of arms, and rustling of plumes, and jingling of spurs within it In short, it was that gay and splendid confusion, in which the eye of youth sees all that is brave and brilliant, and that of experience much that is doubtful, deceitful, false, and hollow—hopes that will never be gratified—promises which will never be fulfilled—pride in the disguise of humility—and insolence in that of frank and generous bounty ”\*

As in the imagination of Shakespeare so in that of Scott, the principal form and object were the structure—that is a hard word—the undulation and diversified composition of human society, the picture of this stood in the centre, and everything else was accessory and secondary to it The old “rows of books,” in which Scott so peculiarly delighted, were made to contribute their element to this varied imagination of humanity. From old family histories, odd memoirs, old law-trials, his fancy elicited new traits to add to the motley assemblage His objection to democracy—an objection of which we can only appreciate the emphatic force when we remember that his youth was

\* Chap xviii , 3rd paragraph

contemporary with the first French Revolution, and the controversy as to the uniform and stereotyped rights of man—was, that it would sweep away this entire picture, level prince and peasant in a common *égalité*,—substitute a scientific rigidity for the irregular and picturesque growth of centuries,—replace an abounding and genial life by a symmetrical but lifeless mechanism. All the descriptions of society in the novels,—whether of feudal society, of modern Scotch society or of English society,—are largely coloured by this feeling. It peeps out everywhere, and liberal critics have endeavoured to show that it was a narrow Toryism; but in reality, it is a subtle compound of the natural instinct of the artist with the plain sagacity of the man of the world.

It would be tedious to show how clearly the same sagacity appears in his delineation of the various great events and movements in society which are described in the Scotch novels. There is scarcely one of them which does not bear it on its surface. Objections may, as we shall show, be urged against the delineation which Scott has given of the Puritan resistance and rebellions, yet scarcely any one will say there is not a worldly sense in it. On the contrary, the very objection is, that it is too worldly, and far too exclusively sensible.

The same thoroughly well-grounded sagacity and comprehensive appreciation of human life is shown in the treatment of what we may call *anomalous* characters. In general, monstrosity is no topic for art. Every one has known in real life characters which if, apart from much experience, he had found described in books, he would have thought unnatural and impossible. Scott, however, abounds in such characters. Meg Merrilies, Edie Ochiltree, Ratcliffe,\* are more or less of that description. That of Meg Merrilies especially is as distorted and eccentric as anything can be. Her appearance is described as making Mannering “start”; and well it might.

\* In *Guy Mannerling*, *The Antiquary*, and *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*

" She was full six feet high, wore a man's greatcoat over the rest of her dress, had in her hand a goodly sloethorn cudgel, and in all points of equipment except her petticoats seemed rather masculine than feminine. Her dark elf-locks shot out like the snakes of the gorgon between an old-fashioned bonnet called a bongrace, heightening the singular effect of her strong and weather-beaten features, which they partly shadowed, while her eye had a wild roll that indicated something of insanity " \*

Her career in the tale corresponds with the strangeness of her exterior. " Harlot, thief, witch, and gipsy," as she describes herself, the hero is preserved by her virtues ; half-crazed as she is described to be, he owes his safety on more than one occasion to her skill in stratagem, and ability in managing those with whom she is connected, and who are most likely to be familiar with her weakness and to detect her craft. Yet on hardly any occasion is the natural reader conscious of this strangeness. Something is of course attributable to the skill of the artist ; for no other power of mind could produce the effect, unless it were aided by the unconscious tact of detailed expression. But the fundamental explanation of this remarkable success is the distinctness with which Scott saw how such a character as Meg Merrilies arose and was produced out of the peculiar circumstances of gipsy life in the localities in which he has placed his scene. He has exhibited this to his readers not by lengthy or elaborate description, but by chosen incidents, short comments, and touches of which he scarcely foresaw the effect. This is the only way in which the fundamental objection to making eccentricity the subject of artistic treatment can be obviated. Monstrosity ceases to be such when we discern the laws of Nature which evolve it : when a real science explains its phenomena, we find that it is in strict accordance with what we call the natural type, but that some rare adjunct or uncommon casualty has inter-

fered and distorted a nature which is really the same, into a phenomenon which is altogether different. Just so with eccentricity in human character, it becomes a topic of literary art only when its identity with the ordinary principles of human nature is exhibited in the midst of, and as it were by means of, the superficial unlikeness. Such a skill, however, requires an easy careless familiarity with usual human life and common human conduct. A writer must have a sympathy with health before he can show us how, and where, and to what extent, that which is unhealthy deviates from it; and it is this consistent acquaintance with regular life which makes the irregular characters of Scott so happy a contrast to the uneasy distortions of less sagacious novelists.

A good deal of the same criticism may be applied to the delineation which Scott has given us of the *poor*. In truth, poverty is an anomaly to rich people. It is very difficult to make out why people who want dinner do not ring the bell. One half of the world, according to the saying, do not know how the other half live. Accordingly, nothing is so rare in fiction as a good delineation of the poor. Though perpetually with us in reality, we rarely meet them in our reading. The requirements of the case present an unusual difficulty to artistic delineation. A good deal of the character of the poor is an unfit topic for continuous art, and yet we wish to have in our books a lifelike exhibition of the whole of that character. Mean manners and mean vices are unfit for prolonged delineation, the everyday pressure of narrow necessities is too petty a pain and too anxious a reality to be dwelt upon. We can bear the mere description of the *Parish Register*—

“ But this poor farce has neither truth nor art  
To please the fancy or to touch the heart  
Dark but not awful, dismal but yet mean,  
With anxious bustle moves the cumbrous scene ;

Presents no objects tender or profound,  
But spreads its cold unmeaning gloom around ; "—

but who could bear to have a long narrative of fortunes "dismal but yet mean," with characters "dark but not awful," and no objects "tender or profound"? Mr. Dickens has in various parts of his writings been led by a sort of pre-Raphaelite *cultus* of reality into an error of this species. His poor people have taken to their poverty very thoroughly; they are poor talkers and poor livers, and in all ways poor people to read about. A whole array of writers have fallen into an opposite mistake. Wishing to preserve their delineations clear from the defects of meanness and vulgarity, they have attributed to the poor a fancied happiness and Arcadian simplicity. The conventional shepherd of ancient times was scarcely displeasing: that which is by everything except express avowal removed from the sphere of reality does not annoy us by its deviations from reality; but the fictitious poor of sentimental novelists are brought almost into contact with real life, half claim to be copies of what actually exists at our very doors, are introduced in close proximity to characters moving in a higher rank, over whom no such ideal charm is diffused, and who are painted with as much truth as the writer's ability enables him to give. Accordingly, the contrast is evident and displeasing: the harsh outlines of poverty will not bear the artificial rose-tint; they are seen through it, like high cheek-bones through the delicate colours of artificial youth; we turn away with some disgust from the false elegance and undeviating art; we prefer the rough poor of nature to the petted poor of the refining describer. Scott has most felicitously avoided both these errors. His poor people are never coarse and never vulgar; their lineaments have the rude traits which a life of conflict will inevitably leave on the minds and manners of those who are to lead it; their notions have the narrowness which is inseparable

from a contracted experience ; their knowledge is not more extended than their restricted means of attaining it would render possible. Almost alone among novelists Scott has given a thorough, minute, lifelike description of poor persons, which is at the same time genial and pleasing. The reason seems to be, that the firm sagacity of his genius comprehended the industrial aspect of poor people's life thoroughly and comprehensively, his experience brought it before him easily and naturally, and his artist's mind and genial disposition enabled him to dwell on those features which would be most pleasing to the world in general. In fact, his own mind of itself and by its own nature dwelt on those very peculiarities. He could not remove his firm and instructed genius into the domain of Arcadian unreality, but he was equally unable to dwell principally, peculiarly, or consecutively, on those petty, vulgar, mean details in which such a writer as Crabbe lives and breathes Hazlitt said that Crabbe described a poor man's cottage like a man who came to distrain for rent ; he catalogued every trivial piece of furniture, defects and cracks and all. Scott describes it as a cheerful but most sensible landlord would describe a cottage on his property : he has a pleasure in it. No detail, or few details, in the life of the inmates escape his experienced and interested eye ; but he dwells on those which do not displease him. He sympathizes with their rough industry and plain joys and sorrows. He does not fatigue himself or excite their wondering smile by theoretical plans of impossible relief. He makes the best of the life which is given, and by a sanguine sympathy makes it still better. A hard life many characters in Scott seem to lead ; but he appreciates, and makes his reader appreciate, the full value of natural feelings, plain thoughts, and applied sagacity.

His ideas of political economy are equally characteristic of his strong sense and genial mind. He was always sneering at Adam Smith, and telling many legends

of that philosopher's absence of mind and inaptitude for the ordinary conduct of life. A contact with the Edinburgh logicians had, doubtless, not augmented his faith in the formal deductions of abstract economy; nevertheless, with the facts before him, he could give a very plain and satisfactory exposition of the genial consequences of old abuses, the distinct necessity for stern reform, and the delicate humanity requisite for introducing that reform temperately and with feeling:

"Even so the Laird of Ellangowan ruthlessly commenced his magisterial reform, at the expense of various established and superannuated pickers and stealers, who had been his neighbours for half a century. He wrought his miracles like a second Duke Humphrey; and by the influence of the beadle's rod, caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, and the palsied to labour. He detected poachers, black-fishers, orchard-breakers, and pigeon-shooters; had the applause of the bench for his reward, and the public credit of an active magistrate.

"All this good had its rateable proportion of evil. Even an admitted nuisance, of ancient standing, should not be abated without some caution. The zeal of our worthy friend now involved in great distress sundry personages whose idle and mendicant habits his own *lâchesse* had contributed to foster, until these habits had become irrecoverable, or whose real incapacity for exertion rendered them fit objects, in their own phrase, for the charity of all well-disposed Christians. The 'long-remembered beggar,' who for twenty years had made his regular rounds within the neighbourhood, received rather as an humble friend than as an object of charity, was sent to the neighbouring workhouse. The decrepit dame, who travelled round the parish upon a hand-barrow, circulating from house to house like a bad shilling, which every one is in haste to pass to his neighbour; she who used to call for her bearers as loud, or louder, than a traveller demands post-horses, even she shared the same disastrous fate. The 'daft Jock,' who, half knave, half idiot, had been the sport of each succeeding race of village children for a good part of a century, was remitted to the county bridewell, where, secluded from free air and sunshine, the only advantages

he was capable of enjoying, he pined and died in the course of six months. The old sailor, who had so long rejoiced the smoky rafters of every kitchen in the country, by singing 'Captain Ward' and 'Bold Admiral Benbow,' was banished from the county for no better reason than that he was supposed to speak with a strong Irish accent. Even the annual rounds of the pedlar were abolished by the Justice, in his hasty zeal for the administration of rural police.

"These things did not pass without notice and censure. We are not made of wood or stone, and the things which connect themselves with our hearts and habits cannot, like bark or lichen, be rent away without our missing them. The farmer's dame lacked her usual share of intelligence, perhaps also the self-applause which she had felt while distributing the *awmous* (alms), in shape of a *gowpen* (handful) of oatmeal, to the mendicant who brought the news. The cottage felt inconvenience from interruption of the petty trade carried on by the itinerant dealers. The children lacked their supply of sugar-plums and toys; the young women wanted pins, ribbons, combs, and ballads; and the old could no longer barter their eggs for salt, snuff, and tobacco. All these circumstances brought the busy Laird of Ellangowan into discredit, which was the more general on account of his former popularity. Even his lineage was brought up in judgment against him. They thought 'naething of what the like of Greenside, or Burnville, or Viewforth, might do, that were strangers in the country; but Ellangowan' that had been a name amang them since the mirk Monanday, and lang before—*him* to be grinding the pur at that rate!—They ca'd his grandfather the Wicked Laird, but, though he was whiles fractious aneuch when he got into roving company, and had ta'en the drap drink, he would have scorned to gang on at this gate. Na, na, the muckle chumley in the Auld Place reeked like a killogie in his time, and there were as mony pur folk riving at the banes in the court and about the door, as there were gentles in the ha'. And the leddy, on ilka Christmas night as it came round, gae twelve siller pennies to ilka pur body about, in honour of the twelve apostles like. They were fond to ca' it papistrie; but I think our great folk might take a lesson frae the papists whiles. They gie another sort o' help to pur folk than just dinging down a saxpence in the brod on the Sabbath, and

kilting, and scourging, and drumming them a' the sax days o' the week besides.' " "

Many other indications of the same healthy and natural sense, which gives so much of their characteristic charm to the Scotch novels, might be pointed out, if it were necessary to weary our readers by dwelling longer on a point we have already laboured so much. One more, however, demands notice because of its importance, and perhaps also because, from its somewhat less obvious character, it might otherwise escape without notice. There has been frequent controversy as to the penal code, if we may so call it, of fiction; that is, as to the apportionment of reward and punishment respectively to the good and evil personages therein delineated; and the practice of authors has been as various as the legislation of critics. One school abandons all thought on the matter, and declares that in the real life we see around us, good people often fail, and wicked people continually prosper; and would deduce the precept, that it is unwise in an art which should "hold the mirror up to nature," † not to copy the uncertain and irregular distribution of its sanctions. Another school, with an exactness which savours at times of pedantry, apportions the success and the failure, the pain and the pleasure of fictitious life, to the moral qualities of those who are living in it—does not think at all, or but little, of any other quality in those characters, and does not at all care whether the penalty and reward are evolved in natural sequence from the circumstances and characters of the tale, or are owing to some monstrous accident far removed from all relation of cause or consequence to those facts and people. Both these classes<sup>s</sup> of writers produce works which jar on the natural sense of common readers, and are at issue with the analytic criticism of the best critics. One school leaves an impression of an uncared-for world, in which

\* *Guy Mannering*, chap. vi

† "Hamlet," iii. 2.

there is no right and no wrong ; the other, of a sort of Governesses' Institution of a world, where all praise and all blame, all good and all pain, are made to turn on special graces and petty offences, pesteringly spoken of and teasingly watched for. The manner of Scott is thoroughly different ; you can scarcely lay down any novel of his without a strong feeling that the world in which the fiction has been laid, and in which your imagination has been moving, is one subject to laws of retribution which, though not apparent on a superficial glance, are yet in steady and consistent operation, and will be quite sure to work their due effect, if time is only given to them. Sagacious men know that this is in its best aspect the condition of life. Certain of the ungodly may, notwithstanding the Psalmist, flourish even through life like a green bay-tree, for providence, in external appearance (far differently from the real truth of things, as we may one day see it), works by a scheme of averages. Most people who ought to succeed, do succeed ; most people who do fail, ought to fail. But there is no exact adjustment of "mark" to merit ; the competitive examination system appears to have an origin more recent than the creation of the world ;— "on the whole," "speaking generally," "looking at life as a whole," are the words in which we must describe the providential adjustment of visible good and evil to visible goodness and badness. And when we look more closely, we see that these general results are the consequences of certain principles which work half unseen, and which are effectual in the main, though thwarted here and there. It is this comprehensive though inexact distribution of good and evil, which is suited to the novelist, and it is exactly this which Scott instinctively adopted. Taking a firm and genial view of the common facts of life,—seeing it as an experienced observer and tried man of action,—he could not help giving the representation of it which is insensibly borne in on the minds of such persons. He delineates

it as a world moving according to laws which are always producing their effect, never *have* produced it ; sometimes fall short a little ; are always nearly successful. Good sense produces its effect, as well as good intention, ability is valuable as well as virtue. It is this peculiarity which gives to his works, more than anything else, the lifelikeness which distinguishes them ; the average of the copy is struck on the same scale as that of reality ; an unexplained, uncommented-on adjustment works in the one, just as a hidden, imperceptible principle of apportionment operates in the other.

The romantic susceptibility of Scott's imagination is as obvious in his novels as his matter-of-fact sagacity. We can find much of it in the place in which we should naturally look first for it,—his treatment of his heroines. We are no indiscriminate admirers of these young ladies, and shall shortly try to show how much they are inferior as imaginative creations to similar creations of the very highest artists. But the mode in which the writer speaks of them everywhere indicates an imagination continually under the illusion which we term romance. A gentle tone of manly admiration pervades the whole delineation of their words and actions. If we look carefully at the narratives of some remarkable female novelists—it would be invidious to give the instances by name—we shall be struck at once with the absence of this, they do not half like their heroines. It would be satirical to say that they were jealous of them ; but it is certain that they analyse the mode in which their charms produce their effects, and the *minutiae* of their operation, much in the same way in which a slightly jealous lady examines the claims of the heroines of society. The same writers have invented the atrocious species of plain heroines. Possibly none of the frauds which are now so much the topic of common remark are so irritating, as that to which the purchaser of a novel is a victim on finding that he has only to peruse a narrative of the conduct and sentiments of an ugly lady.

“ Two-and-sixpence to know the heart which has high cheek-bones ! ” Was there ever such an imposition ? Scott would have recoiled from such a conception. Even Jeanie Deans,\* though no heroine, like Flora MacIvor,† is described as “ comely,” and capable of looking almost pretty when required, and she has a compensating set-off in her sister, who is beautiful as well as unwise. Speaking generally, as is the necessity of criticism, Scott makes his heroines, at least by profession, attractive, and dwells on their attractiveness, though not with the wild ecstasy of insane youth, yet with the tempered and mellow admiration common to genial men of this world. Perhaps at times we are rather displeased at his explicitness, and disposed to hang back and carp at the admirable qualities displayed to us. But this is only a stronger evidence of the peculiarity which we speak of,—of the unconscious sentiments inseparable from Scott’s imagination.

The same romantic tinge undeniably shows itself in Scott’s pictures of the past. Many exceptions have been taken to the detail of mediæval life as it is described to us in *Ivanhoe* ; but one merit will always remain to it, and will be enough to secure to it immense popularity. It describes the Middle Ages as we should have wished them to have been. We do not mean that the delineation satisfies those accomplished admirers of the old Church system who fancy that they have found among the prelates and barons of the fourteenth century a close approximation to the theocracy which they would recommend for our adoption. On the contrary, the theological merits of the Middle Ages are not prominent in Scott’s delineation. “ Dogma ” was not in his way : a cheerful man of the world is not anxious for a precise definition of peculiar doctrines. The charm of *Ivanhoe* is addressed to a simpler sort of imagination, to that kind of boyish fancy which idolizes mediæval society.

\* In *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*

† In *Waverley*

as the “fighting time” Every boy has heard of tournaments, and has a firm persuasion that in an age of tournaments life was thoroughly well understood. A martial society, where men fought hand to hand on good horses with large lances, in peace for pleasure, and in war for business, seems the very ideal of perfection to a bold and simply fanciful boy *Ivanhoe* spreads before him the full landscape of such a realm, with Richard Cœur-de-Lion, a black horse, and the passage of arms at Ashby. Of course he admires it, and thinks there was never such a writer, and will never more be such a world. And a mature critic will share his admiration, at least to the extent of admitting that nowhere else have the elements of a martial romance been so gorgeously accumulated without becoming oppressive ; their fanciful charm been so powerfully delineated, and yet so constantly relieved by touches of vigorous sagacity. One single fact shows how great the romantic illusion is. The pressure of painful necessity is scarcely so great in this novel, as in novels of the same writer in which the scene is laid in modern times. Much may be said in favour of the mediæval system as contradistinguished from existing society ; much has been said. But no one can maintain that general comfort was as much diffused as it is now A certain ease pervades the structure of later society. Our houses may not last so long, are not so picturesque, will leave no such ruins behind them ; but they are warmed with hot water, have no draughts, and contain sofas instead of rushes A slight daily unconscious luxury is hardly ever wanting to the dwellers in civilization ; like the gentle air of a genial climate, it is a perpetual minute enjoyment. The absence of this marks a rude barbaric time. We may avail ourselves of rough pleasures, stirring amusements, exciting actions, strange rumours ; but life is hard and harsh The cold air of the keen North may brace and invigorate, but it cannot soothe us. All sensible people know that the Middle Ages must have been very uncom-

fortable ; there was a difficulty about " good food " ;— almost insuperable obstacles to the cultivation of nice detail and small enjoyment No one knew the abstract facts on which this conclusion rests better than Scott , but his delineation gives no general idea of the result. A thoughtless reader rises with the impression that the Middle Ages had the same elements of happiness which we have at present, and that they had fighting besides We do not assert that this tenet is explicitly taught ; on the contrary, many facts are explained, and many customs elucidated from which a discriminating and deducing reader would infer the meanness of poverty and the harshness of barbarism. But these less imposing traits escape the rapid, and still more the boyish reader His general impression is one of romance , and though, when roused, Scott was quite able to take a distinct view of the opposing facts, he liked his own mind to rest for the most part in the same pleasing illusion.

The same sort of historical romance is shown likewise in Scott's picture of remarkable historical characters His Richard I. is the traditional Richard, with traits heightened and ennobled in perfect conformity to the spirit of tradition. Some illustration of the same quality might be drawn from his delineations of the Puritan rebellions and the Cavalier enthusiasm. We might show that he ever dwells on the traits and incidents most attractive to a genial and spirited imagination But the most remarkable instance of the power which romantic illusion exercised over him, is his delineation of Mary Queen of Scots He refused at one time of his life to write a biography of that princess " because his opinion was contrary to his feeling " He evidently considered her guilt to be clearly established, and thought, with a distinguished lawyer, that he should " direct a jury to find her guilty " ; but his fancy, like that of most of his countrymen, took a peculiar and special interest in the beautiful lady who, at any rate, had suffered so

much and so fatally at the hands of a queen of England. He could not bring himself to dwell with nice accuracy on the evidence which substantiates her criminality, or on the still clearer indications of that unsound and over-crafty judgment, which was the fatal inheritance of the Stuart family, and which, in spite of advantages that scarcely any other family in the world has enjoyed, has made their name a historical by-word for misfortune. The picture in *The Abbot*, one of the best historical pictures which Scott has given us, is principally the picture of the queen as the fond tradition of his countrymen exhibited her. Her entire innocence, it is true, is never alleged: but the enthusiasm of her followers is dwelt on with approving sympathy; their confidence is set forth at large, her influence over them is skilfully delineated; the fascination of charms chastened by misfortune is delicately indicated. We see a complete picture of the beautiful queen, of the suffering and sorrowful, but yet not insensible woman Scott could not, however, as a close study will show us, quite conceal the unfavourable nature of his fundamental opinion. In one remarkable passage the struggle of the judgment is even conspicuous, and in others the sagacity of the practised lawyer,—the “thread of the attorney,” as he used to call it, in his nature,—qualifies and modifies the sentiment hereditary in his countrymen, and congenial to himself.

This romantic imagination is a habit of power (as we may choose to call it) of mind which is almost essential to the highest success in the historical novel. The aim, at any rate the effect, of this class of works seems to be to deepen and confirm the received view of historical personages. A great and acute writer may, from an accurate study of original documents, discover that those impressions are erroneous, and by a process of elaborate argument substitute others which he deems more accurate. But this can only be effected by writing a regular history. The essence of the achievement is

the proof. If Mr. Froude had put forward his view of Henry VIII.'s character in a professed novel, he would have been laughed at. It is only by a kind of fiction, to attest facts and authentic documents, that a view so original could obtain even a hearing. We can back with a little anger from a representation which is very ill-imaginative, and which contradicts our impression. We do not like to have our opinions disturbed by reasoning, but it is impertinent to attempt to disturb them by fancies. A writer of the historical novel is bound by the popular conception of his subject; and commonly it will be found that this popular impression is to some extent a romantic one. An element of exaggeration clings to the popular judgment: great vices are made greater, great virtues greater also; interesting incidents are made more interesting, soft legends more soft. The novelist who disregards this tendency will do so at the peril of his popularity. His business is to make attraction more attractive, and not to impair the pleasant pictures of ready-made romance by an attempt at grim reality.

We may therefore sum up the indications of this characteristic excellence of Scott's novels by saying, that more than any novelist he has given us fresh pictures of practical human society, with its cares and troubles, its excitements and its pleasures; that he has delineated more distinctly than any one else the framework in which this society inheres, and by the boundaries of which it is shaped and limited; that he has made more clear the way in which strange and eccentric characters grow out of that ordinary and usual system of life; that he has extended his view over several periods of society, and given an animated description of the external appearance of each, and a firm representation of its social institutions; that he has shown very graphically what we may call the worldly laws of moral government; and that over all these he has spread the glow of sentiment natural to a

manly mind, and an atmosphere of generosity congenial to a cheerful one. It is from the collective effect of these causes, and from the union of sense and sentiment which is the principle of them all, that Scott derives the peculiar healthiness which distinguishes him. There are no such books as his for the sick-room, or for freshening the painful intervals of a morbid mind. Mere sense is dull, mere sentiment unsubstantial ; a sensation of genial healthiness is only given by what combines the solidity of the one and the brightening charm of the other.

Some guide to Scott's defects, or to the limitations of his genius, if we would employ a less ungenial and perhaps more correct expression, is to be discovered, as usual, from the consideration of his characteristic excellence. As it is his merit to give bold and animated pictures of this world, it is his defect to give but insufficient representations of qualities which this world does not exceedingly prize,—of such as do not thrust themselves very forward in it,—of such as are in some sense above it. We may illustrate this in several ways

One of the parts of human nature which are systematically omitted in Scott, is the searching and abstract intellect. This did not lie in his way. No man had a stronger sagacity, better adapted for the guidance of common men, and the conduct of common transactions. Few could hope to form a more correct opinion on things and subjects which were brought before him in actual life, no man had a more useful intellect. But on the other hand, as will be generally observed to be the case, no one was less inclined to that probing and seeking and anxious inquiry into things in general which is the necessity of some minds, and a sort of intellectual famine in their nature. He had no call to investigate the theory of the universe, and he would not have been able to comprehend those who did. Such a mind as Shelley's would have been entirely removed from his comprehension. He had no call to

mix "awful talk and asking looks" \* with his love of the visible scene. He could not have addressed the universe :

" I have watched

Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps ;  
 And my heart ever gazes on the depth  
 Of thy deep mysteries I have made my bed  
 In charnels and on coffins, where black death  
 Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,  
 Hoping to still these obstinate questionings  
 Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,  
 Thy messenger, to render up the tale  
 Of what we are " †

Such thoughts would have been to him "thinking without an object," "abstracted speculations," "cobwebs of the unintelligible brain." Above all minds, his had the Baconian propensity to work upon "stuff." At first sight, it would not seem that this was a defect likely to be very hurtful to the works of a novelist. The labours of the searching and introspective intellect, however needful, absorbing, and in some degree delicious, to the seeker himself, are not in general very delightful to those who are not seeking. Genial men in middle life are commonly intolerant of that philosophizing which their prototype, in old times, classed side by side with the lisping of youth. The theological novel, which was a few years ago so popular, and which is likely to have a recurring influence in times when men's belief is unsettled, and persons who cannot or will not read large treatises have thoughts in their minds and inquiries in their hearts, suggests to those who are accustomed to it the absence elsewhere of what is necessarily one of its most distinctive and prominent subjects. The desire to attain a belief, which has become one of the most familiar sentiments of heroes and heroines, would have seemed utterly incongruous to the plain sagacity

\* Shelley, "Alastor"

† *Ibid*

of Scott, and also to his old-fashioned art. Creeds are *data* in his novels ; people have different creeds, but each keeps his own. Some persons will think that this is not altogether amiss ; nor do we particularly wish to take up the defence of the dogmatic novel. Nevertheless, it will strike those who are accustomed to the youthful generation of a cultivated time, that the passion of intellectual inquiry is one of the strongest impulses in many of them, and one of those which give the predominant colouring to the conversation and exterior mind of many more. And a novelist will not exercise the most potent influence over those subject to that passion, if he entirely omit the delineation of it. Scott's works have only one merit in this relation : they are an excellent rest to those who have felt this passion, and have had something too much of it.

The same indisposition to the abstract exercises of the intellect shows itself in the reflective portions of Scott's novels, and perhaps contributes to their popularity with that immense majority of the world who strongly share in that same indisposition : it prevents, however, their having the most powerful intellectual influence on those who have at any time of their lives voluntarily submitted themselves to this acute and refining discipline. The reflections of a practised thinker have a peculiar charm like the last touches of the accomplished artist. The cunning exactitude of the professional hand leaves a trace in the very language. A nice discrimination of thought makes men solicitous of the most apt expressions to diffuse their thoughts. Both words and meaning gain a metallic brilliancy, like the glittering precision of the pure Attic air. Scott's is a healthy and genial world of reflection, but it wants the charm of delicate exactitude.

The same limitation of Scott's genius shows itself in a very different portion of art—in his delineation of his heroines. The same blunt sagacity of imagination which fitted him to excel in the rough description of

obvious life, rather unfitted him for delineating the less substantial essence of the female character. The nice *minutiae* of society, by means of which female novelists have been so successful in delineating their own sex, were rather too small for his robust and powerful mind. Perhaps, too, a certain unworldliness of *imagination* is necessary to enable men to comprehend or delineate that essence: unworldliness of *life* is no doubt not requisite; rather, perhaps, worldliness is necessary to the acquisition of a sufficient experience. But an absorption in the practical world does not seem favourable to a comprehension of anything which does not precisely belong to it. Its interests are too engrossing; its excitements too keen; it modifies the fancy, and in the change unfits it for everything else. Something, too, in Scott's character and history made it more difficult for him to give a representation of women than of men. Goethe used to say, that his idea of woman was not drawn from his experience, but that it came to him before experience, and that he explained his experience by a reference to it \*. And though this is a German, and not very happy, form of expression, yet it appears to indicate a very important distinction. Some efforts of the imagination are made so early in life, just as it were at the dawn of the conscious faculties, that we are never able to fancy ourselves as destitute of them. They are part of the mental constitution with which, so to speak, we awoke to existence. These are always far more firm, vivid, and definite, than any other images of our fancy, and we apply them, half unconsciously, to any facts and sentiments and actions which may occur to us later in life, whether arising from within or thrust upon us from the outward world. Goethe doubtless meant that the idea of the female character was to him one of these first elements of imagination; not a thing puzzled out, or which he remembered having

\* Conversations with Eckermann and Soret, 22nd Oct 1826.

conceived, but a part of the primitive conceptions which, being coeval with his memory, seemed inseparable from his consciousness. The descriptions of women likely to be given by this sort of imagination will probably be the best descriptions. A mind which would arrive at this idea of the female character by this process, and so early, would be one obviously of more than usual susceptibility. The early imagination does not commonly take this direction ; it thinks most of horses and lances, tournaments and knights ; only a mind with an unusual and instinctive tendency to this kind of thought, would be borne thither so early or so effectually. And even independently of this probable peculiarity of the individual, the primitive imagination in general is likely to be the most accurate which men can form ; not, of course, of the external manifestations and detailed manners, but of the inner sentiment and characteristic feeling of women. The early imagination conceives what it does conceive very justly ; fresh from the facts, stirred by the new aspect of things, undimmed by the daily passage of constantly forgotten images, not misled by the irregular analogies of a dislocated life,—the early mind sees what it does see with a spirit and an intentness never given to it again. A mind like Goethe's, of very strong imagination, aroused at the earliest age,—not of course by passions, but by an unusual strength in that undefined longing which is the prelude to our passions,—will form the best idea of the inmost female nature which masculine nature can form. The difference is evident between the characters of women formed by Goethe's imagination or Shakespeare's, and those formed by such an imagination as that of Scott. The latter seem so external. We have traits, features, manners ; we know the heroine as she appeared in the street ; in some degree we know how she talked, but we never know how she felt—least of all what she was. we always feel there is a world behind, unanalysed, unrepresented, which we cannot attain to. Such a

character as Margaret in "Faust" is known to us to the very soul ; so is Imogen ; so is Ophelia. Edith Bellenden, Flora Macivor, Miss Wardour,<sup>\*</sup> are young ladies who, we are told, were good-looking, and well dressed (according to the old fashion), and sensible ; but we feel we know but very little of them, and they do not haunt our imaginations. The failure of Scott in this line of art is more conspicuous, because he had not in any remarkable degree the later experience of female detail, with which some minds have endeavoured to supply the want of the early essential imagination, and which Goethe possessed in addition to it. It was rather late, according to his biographer, before Scott set up for a "squire of dames" ; he was "a lame young man, very enthusiastic about ballad poetry" ; he was deeply in love with a young lady, supposed to be imaginatively represented by Flora Macivor, but he was unsuccessful. It would be over-ingenuous to argue, from his failing in a single love-affair, that he had no peculiar interest in young ladies in general ; but the whole description of his youth shows that young ladies exercised over him a rather more divided influence than is usual. Other pursuits intervened, much more than is common with persons of the imaginative temperament, and he never led the life of flirtation from which Goethe believed that he derived so much instruction. Scott's heroines, therefore, are, not unnaturally, faulty, since from a want of the very peculiar instinctive imagination he could not give us the essence of women, and from the habits of his life he could not delineate to us their detailed life with the appreciative accuracy of habitual experience. Jeanie Deans is probably the best of his heroines, and she is so because she is the least of a heroine. The plain matter-of-fact element in the peasant-girl's life and circumstances suited a robust imagination. There is little in the part of her character that is very finely

\* In *Old Mortality*, *Waverley*, and *The Antiquary*.

described which is characteristically feminine. She is not a masculine, but she is an epicene heroine. Her love-affair with Butler, a single remarkable scene excepted, is rather commonplace than otherwise.

A similar criticism might be applied to Scott's heroes. Every one feels how commonplace they are—Waverley excepted, whose very vacillation gives him a sort of character. They have little personality. They are all of the same type; excellent young men—rather strong—able to ride and climb and jump. They are always said to be sensible, and bear out the character by being not unwilling sometimes to talk platitudes. But we know nothing of their inner life. They are said to be in love; but we have no special account of their individual sentiments. People show their character in their love more than in anything else. These young gentlemen all love in the same way—in the vague commonplace way of this world. We have no sketch or dramatic expression of the life within. Their souls are quite unknown to us. If there is an exception, it is Edgar Ravenswood.\* But if we look closely, we may observe that the notion which we obtain of his character, unusually broad as it is, is not a notion of him in his capacity of hero, but in his capacity of distressed peer. His proud poverty gives a distinctness which otherwise his lineaments would not have. We think little of his love; we think much of his narrow circumstances and, compressed haughtiness.

The same exterior delineation of character shows itself in his treatment of men's religious nature. A novelist is scarcely, in the notion of ordinary readers, bound to deal with this at all; if he does, it will be one of his great difficulties to indicate it graphically, yet without dwelling on it. Men who purchase a novel do not wish a stone or a sermon. All lengthened reflections must be omitted; the whole armoury of pulpit eloquence. But

\* In *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

no delineation of human nature can be considered complete which omits to deal with man in relation to the questions which occupy him as man, with his convictions as to the theory of the universe and his own destiny ; the human heart throbs on few subjects with a passion so intense, so peculiar, and so typical. From an artistic view, it is a blunder to omit an element which is so characteristic of human life, which contributes so much to its animation, and which is so picturesque. A reader of a more simple mind, little apt to indulge in such criticism, feels "a want of depth," as he would speak, in delineations from which so large an element of his own most passionate and deepest nature is omitted. It can hardly be said that there is an omission of the religious nature in Scott. But, at the same time, there is no adequate delineation of it. If we refer to the facts of his life, and the view of his character which we collect from them, we shall find that his religion was of a qualified and double sort. He was a genial man of the world, and had the easy faith in the kindly *\* Dieu des bonnes gens*, which is natural to such a person ; and he had also a half-poetic principle of superstition in his nature, inclining him to believe in ghosts, legends, fairies, and elves, which did not affect his daily life, or possibly his superficial belief, but was nevertheless very constantly present to his fancy, and which affected, as is the constitution of human nature, through that frequency, the undefined, half-expressed, inexpressible feelings which are at the root of that belief. Superstition was a kind of Jacobitism in his religion ; as a sort of absurd reliance on the hereditary principle modified insensibly his leanings in the practical world, so a belief in the existence of unevidenced, and often absurd, supernatural beings qualified his commonest speculations on the higher world. Both these elements may be thought to enter into the highest religion ;

\* Béranger.

there is a principle of cheerfulness which will justify in its measure a genial enjoyment, and also a principle of fear which those who think only of that enjoyment will deem superstition, and which will really become superstition in the over-anxious and credulous accepter of it. But in a true religion these two elements will be combined. The character of God images itself very imperfectly in any human soul ; but in the highest it images itself as a whole ; it leaves an abiding impression which will justify anxiety and allow of happiness. The highest aim of the religious novelist would be to show how this operates in human character ; to exhibit in their curious modification our religious love, and also our religious fear. In the novels of Scott the two elements appear in a state of separation, as they did in his own mind. We have the superstition of the peasantry in *The Antiquary*, in *Guy Mannering*, everywhere almost ; we have likewise a pervading tone of genial easy reflection characteristic of the man of the world who produced, and agreeable to the people of the world who read, these works. But we have no picture of the two in combination. We are scarcely led to think on the subject at all, so much do other subjects distract our interest, but if we do think, we are puzzled at the contrast. We do not know which is true, the uneasy belief of superstition, or the easy satisfaction of the world ; we waver between the two, and have no suggestion even hinted to us of the possibility of a reconciliation. The character of the Puritans certainly did not in general embody such a reconciliation, but it might have been made by a sympathizing artist the vehicle for a delineation of a struggle after it. The two elements of love and fear ranked side by side in their minds with an intensity which is rare even in minds that feel only one of them. The delineation of Scott is amusing, but superficial. He caught the ludicrous traits which tempt the mirthful imagination, but no other side of the character pleased him. The



not for another ; there is nothing even in their love which is suitable for immortality. As has been noticed Scott also omits any delineation of the abstract side of unworldly intellect. This too might not have been so severe a reproach, considering its undramatic, unanimated nature, if it had stood alone , but taken in connection with the omission which we have just spoken of, it is most important. As the union of sense and romance makes the world of Scott so characteristically agreeable,—a fascinating picture of this world in the light in which we like best to dwell on it ; so the deficiency in the attenuated, striving intellect, as well as in the supernatural soul, gives to the “ world ” of Scott the cumbrousness and temporality—in short, the materialism—which is characteristic of the world

We have dwelt so much on what we think are the characteristic features of Scott’s imaginative representations that we have left ourselves no room to criticize the two most natural points of criticism in a novelist—plot and style. This is not, however, so important in Scott’s case as it would commonly be. He used to say, “ It is of no use having a plot ; you cannot keep to it.” He modified and changed his thread of story from day to day,—sometimes even from bookselling reasons, and on the suggestion of others. An elaborate work of narrative art could not be produced in this way, every one will concede ; the highest imagination, able to look far over the work, is necessary for that task. But the plots produced, so to say, by the pen of the writer as he passes over the events, are likely to have a freshness and a suitableness to those events, which is not possessed by the inferior writers who make up a mechanical plot before they commence. The procedure of the highest genius doubtless is scarcely a procedure. the view of the whole story comes at once upon its imagination like the delicate end and the distinct beginning of some long vista. But all minds do not possess the highest mode of conception , and among lower modes, it is

doubtless better to possess the vigorous fancy which creates each separate scene in succession as it goes, than the pedantic intellect which designs everything long before it is wanted. There is a play in unconscious creation which no voluntary elaboration and preconceived fitting of distinct ideas can ever hope to produce. If the whole cannot be created by one bounding effort, it is better that each part should be created separately and in detail.

The style of Scott would deserve the highest praise if M. Thiers could establish his theory of narrative language. He maintains that a historian's language approaches perfection in proportion as it aptly communicates what is meant to be narrated without drawing any attention to itself. Scott's style fulfils this condition. Nobody rises from his works without a most vivid idea of what is related, and no one is able to quote a single phrase in which it has been narrated. We are inclined, however, to differ from the great French historian, and to oppose to him a theory derived from a very different writer. Coleridge used to maintain that all good poetry was untranslatable into words of the same language without injury to the sense: the meaning was, in his view, to be so inseparably intertwined even with the shades of the language, that the change of a single expression would make a difference in the accompanying feeling, if not in the bare signification: consequently, all good poetry must be remembered exactly, —to change a word is to modify the essence. Rigidly this theory can only be applied to a few kinds of poetry, or special passages in which the imagination is exerting itself to the utmost, and collecting from the whole range of associated language the very expressions which it requires. The highest excitation of feeling is necessary to this peculiar felicity of choice. In calmer moments the mind has either a less choice, or less acuteness of selective power. Accordingly, in prose it would be absurd to expect any such nicety. Still, on great

occasions in imaginative fiction, there should be passages in which the words seem to cleave to the matter. The excitement is as great as in poetry. The words should become part of the sense. They should attract our attention, as this is necessary to impress them on the memory; but they should not in so doing distract attention from the meaning conveyed. On the contrary, it is their inseparability from their meaning which gives them their charm and their power. In truth, Scott's language, like his sense, was such as became a bold, sagacious man of the world. He used the first sufficient words which came uppermost, and seems hardly to have been sensible, even in the works of others, of that exquisite accuracy and inexplicable appropriateness of which we have been speaking.

To analyse in detail the faults and merits of even a few of the greatest of the Waverley Novels would be impossible in the space at our command on the present occasion. We have only attempted a general account of a few main characteristics. Every critic must, however, regret to have to leave topics so tempting to remark upon as many of Scott's stories, and a yet greater number of his characters.

## LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU\*

(1862)

NOTHING is so transitory as second-class fame. The name of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is hardly now known to the great mass of ordinary English readers. A generation has arisen which has had time to forget her. Yet only a few years since, an allusion to the "Lady Mary" would have been easily understood by every well-informed person, young ladies were enjoined to form their style upon hers, and no one could have anticipated that her letters would seem in 1862 as different from what a lady of rank would then write or publish as if they had been written in the times of paganism. The very change, however, of popular taste and popular morality gives these letters now a kind of interest. The farther and the more rapidly we have drifted from where we once lay, the more do we wish to learn what kind of port it was. We venture, therefore, to recommend the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as an instructive and profitable study, not indeed to the youngest of young ladies, but to those maturer persons of either sex "who have taken all knowledge to be their province," and who have com-

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menced their readings in "universality" by an assiduous perusal of Parisian fiction.

It is, we admit, true that these letters are not at the present day very agreeable reading. What our grandfathers and grandmothers thought of them it is not so easy to say. But it now seems clear that Lady Mary was that most miserable of human beings, an ambitious and wasted woman ; that she brought a very cultivated intellect into a very cultivated society ; that she gave to that society what it was most anxious to receive, and received from it all which it had to bestow ;—and yet that this all was to her as nothing. The high intellectual world of England has never been so compact, so visible in a certain sense, so enjoyable, as it was in her time. She had a mind to understand it, beauty to adorn it, and wit to amuse it ; but she chose to pass a great part of her life in exile, and returned at last to die at home among a new generation, whose name she hardly knew, and to whom she herself was but a spectacle and a wonder.

Lady Mary Pierrepont—for that was by birth her name—belonged to a family which had a traditional reputation for ability and cultivation. The *Memoirs of Lucy Hutchinson*—almost the only legacy that remains to us from the first generation of refined Puritans, the only book, at any rate, which effectually brings home to us how different they were in taste and in temper from their more vulgar and feeble successors—contains a curious panegyric on *wise William Pierrepont*, to whom the Parliamentary party resorted as an oracle of judgment, and whom Cromwell himself, if tradition may be trusted, at times condescended to consult and court. He did not, however, transmit much of his discretion to his grandson, Lady Mary's father. This nobleman, for he inherited from an elder branch of the family both the marquisate of Dorchester and the dukedom of Kingston, was a mere man "about town," as the homely phrase then went, who passed a long life of

fashionable idleness interspersed with political intrigue, and who signalized his old age by marrying a young beauty of fewer years than his youngest daughter, who, as he very likely knew, cared nothing for him and much for another person. He had the "grand air," however, and he expected his children, when he visited them, to kneel down immediately and ask his blessing, which, if his character was what is said, must have been *very* valuable. The only attention he ever (that we know of) bestowed on Lady Mary was a sort of theatrical outrage, pleasant enough to her at the time, but scarcely in accordance with the educational theories in which we now believe. He was a member of the Kit-Cat, a great Whig club, the Brooks's of Queen Anne's time, which, like Brooks's, appears not to have been purely political, but to have found time for occasional relaxation and for somewhat unbusiness-like discussions. They held annually a formal meeting to arrange the female toasts for that year; and we are told that "a whim seized" her father "to nominate" Lady Mary, "then not eight years old, a candidate; alleging that she was far prettier than any lady on their list. The other members demurred, because the rules of the club forbade them to elect a beauty whom they had never seen.

'Then you shall see her,' cried he; and in the gaiety of the moment sent orders home to have her finely dressed and brought to him at the tavern, where she was received with acclamations, her claim unanimously allowed, her health drunk by every one present, and her name engraved in due form upon a drinking-glass. The company consisting of some of the most eminent men in England, she went from the lap of one poet, or patriot, or statesman, to the arms of another, was feasted with sweetmeats, overwhelmed with caresses, and what perhaps already pleased her better than either, heard her wit and beauty loudly extolled on every side. Pleasure, she said, was too poor a word to express her sensations: they amounted to ecstasy: never again.

throughout her whole future life, did she pass so happy a day. Nor, indeed, could she ; for the love of admiration, which this scene was calculated to excite or increase, could never again be so fully gratified ; there is always some alloying ingredient in the cup, some drawback upon the triumphs, of grown people. Her father carried on the frolic, and, we may conclude, confirmed the taste, by having her picture painted for the club-room, that she might be enrolled a regular toast." Perhaps some young ladies of more than eight years old would not much object to have lived in those times. Fathers may be wiser now than they were then, but they rarely make themselves so thoroughly agreeable to their children

This stimulating education would leave a weak and vain girl still more vain and weak ; but it had not that effect on Lady Mary. Vain she probably was, and her father's boastfulness perhaps made her vainer ; but her vanity took an intellectual turn. She read vaguely and widely ; she managed to acquire some knowledge—how much is not clear—of Greek and Latin, and certainly learned with sufficient thoroughness French and Italian. She used to say that she had the worst education in the world, and that it was only by the "help of an uncommon memory and indefatigable labour" that she had acquired her remarkable attainments. Her father certainly seems to have been capable of any degree of inattention and neglect ; but we should not perhaps credit too entirely all the legends which an old lady recounted to her grandchildren of the intellectual difficulties of her youth.

She seems to have been encouraged by her grandmother, one of the celebrated Evelyn family, whose memory is thus enigmatically but still expressively enshrined in the diary of the author of *Sylva* :—"Under this date," we are informed, "of the 2nd of July, 1649," he records a day spent at Godstone, where Sir John (this lady's father) "was on a visit with his daughter", and he adds : "Mem The prodigious memory of Sir

John of Wilts's daughter, since married to Mr. W. Pierrepont" The lady who was thus formidable in her youth deigned in her old age to write frequently, as we should now say,—to open a "regular commerce" of letters, as was said in that age—with Lady Mary when quite a girl, which she always believed to have been beneficial to her, and probably believed rightly; for she was intelligent enough to comprehend what was said to her, and the old lady had watched many changes in many things.

Her greatest intellectual guide, at least so in after life she used to relate, was Mr. Wortley, whom she afterwards married. "When I was young," she said, "I was a great admirer of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that was one of the chief reasons that set me upon the thoughts of stealing the Latin language. Mr. Wortley was the only person to whom I communicated my design, and he encouraged me in it. I used to study five or six hours a day for two years in my father's library, and so got that language, whilst everybody else thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances." She perused, however, some fiction also; for she possessed, till her death, the whole library of Mrs. Lennox's *Female Quixote*, a ponderous series of novels in folio, in one of which she had written, in her fairest youthful hand, the names and characteristic qualities of "the beautiful Diana, the volatile Clemene, the melancholy Doris, Celadon the faithful, Adamas the wise, and so on, forming two columns."

Of Mr. Wortley's character it is not difficult, from the materials before us, to decipher the features; he was a slow man, with a taste for quick companions. Swift's diary to Stella mentions an evening spent over a bottle of old wine with Mr. Wortley and Mr. Addison. Mr. Wortley was a rigid Whig, and Swift's transition to Toryism soon broke short that friendship. But with Addison he maintained an intimacy which lasted during their joint lives, and survived the marriages of both.

With Steele likewise he was upon the closest terms, is said to have written some papers in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*; and the second volume of the former is certainly dedicated to him in affectionate and respectful terms.

Notwithstanding, however, these conspicuous testimonials to high ability, Mr. Wortley was an orderly and dull person. Every letter received by him from his wife during five and twenty years of absence, was found, at his death, carefully endorsed with the date of its arrival, and with a *synopsis* of its contents. "He represented," we are told, "at various times, Huntingdon, Westminster, and Peterborough in Parliament, and appears to have been a member of that class who win respectful attention by sober and business-like qualities; and his name is constantly found in the drier and more formal part of the politics of the time." He answered to the description given more recently of a similar person: "Is not," it was asked, "Sir John — a very methodical person?" "Certainly he is," was the reply, "he files his invitations to dinner." The Wortley papers, according to the description of those who have inspected them, seem to contain the accumulations of similar documents during many years. He hoarded money, however, to more purpose, for he died one of the richest commoners in England; and a considerable part of the now marvellous wealth of the Bute family seems at first to have been derived from him.

Whatever good qualities Addison and Steele discovered in Mr. Wortley, they were certainly not those of a good writer. We have from his pen and from that of Lady Mary a description of the state of English politics during the three first years of George III, and any one who wishes to understand how much readability depends upon good writing would do well to compare the two. Lady Mary's is a clear and bright description of all the superficial circumstances of the time; Mr. Wortley's is equally superficial, often unintelligible and always

lumbering, and scarcely succeeds in telling us more than that the writer was wholly unsuccessful in all which he tried to do. As to Mr. Wortley's contributions to the periodicals of his time, we may suspect that the jottings preserved at London are all which he ever wrote of them, and that the style and arrangement were supplied by more skilful writers. Even a county member might furnish headings for the *Saturday Review*. He might say: "Trent British vessel—Americans always intrusive—Support Government—Kill all that is necessary."

What Lady Mary discovered in Mr. Wortley it is easier to say and shorter, for he was very handsome. If his portrait can be trusted, there was a placid and business-like repose about him, which might easily be attractive to a rather excitable and wild young lady, especially when combined with imposing features and a quiet, sweet expression. He attended to *her* also. When she was a girl of fourteen, he met her at a party, and evinced his admiration. And a little while later, it is not difficult to fancy that a literary young lady might be much pleased with a good-looking gentleman not uncomfortably older than herself, yet having a place in the world, and well known to the literary men of the age. He was acquainted with the classics too, or was supposed to be so, and whether it was a consequence of or a preliminary to their affections, Lady Mary wished to know the classics also.

Bishop Burnet was so kind as to superintend the singular studies—for such they were clearly thought—of this aristocratic young lady, and the translation of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, which he revised, is printed in this edition of her works. But even so grave an undertaking could not wholly withdraw her from more congenial pursuits. She commenced a correspondence with Miss Wortley, Mr. Wortley's unmarried sister, which still remains, though Miss Wortley's letters are hardly to be called hers, for her brother composed, and she merely copied them. The correspondence is scarcely

in the sort of English or in the tone which young ladies, we understand, now use

“ It is as impossible,” says Miss Wortley, “ for my dearest Lady Mary to utter thought that can seem dull as to put on a look that is not beautiful. Want of wit is a fault that those who envy you most would not be able to find in your kind compliments. To me they seem perfect, since repeated assurances of your kindness forbid me to question their sincerity. You have often found that the most angry, nay, the most neglectful air you can assume, has made as deep a wound as the kindest ; and these lines of yours, that you tax with dulness (perhaps because they were writ when you was not in a right humour, or when your thoughts were elsewhere employed), are so far from deserving the imputation, that the very turn of your expression, had I forgot the rest of your charms, would be sufficient to make me lament the only fault you have—your inconstancy ”

To which the reply is :

“ I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear Mrs Wortley, for the wit, beauty, and other fine qualities you so generously bestow upon me Next to receiving them from heaven, you are the person from whom I would choose to receive gifts and graces I am very well satisfied to owe them to your own delicacy of imagination, which represents to you the idea of a fine lady, and you have good nature enough to fancy I am she All this is mighty well, but you do not stop there, imagination is boundless After giving me imaginary wit and beauty, you give me imaginary passions, and you tell me I’m in love. if I am it is a perfect sin of ignorance, for I don’t so much as know the man’s name I have been studying these three hours, and cannot guess who you mean I passed the days of Nottingham races [at] Thoresby without seeing, or even wishing to see, one of the sex Now, if I am in love, I have very hard fortune to conceal it so industriously from my own knowledge, and yet discover it so much to other people ’Tis against all form to have such a passion as that, without giving one sigh for the matter. Pray tell me the name of him I love, that I may (according to the

laudable custom of lovers) sigh to the woods and groves hereabouts, and teach it to the echo."

After some time Miss Wortley unfortunately died, and there was an obvious difficulty in continuing the correspondence without the aid of an appropriate sisterly screen. Mr. Wortley seems to have been tranquil and condescending, perhaps he thought placid tactics would be most effective, for Lady Mary was not so calm. He sent her some *Tatlers*, and received, by way of thanks, the following tolerably encouraging letter:

“ *To Mr. Wortley Montagu* ”

“ I am surprised at one of the *Tatlers* you send me; is it possible to have any sort of esteem for a person one believes capable of having such trifling inclinations? Mr Bickerstaff has very wrong notions of our sex. I can say there are some of us that despise charms of show, and all the pageantry of greatness, perhaps with more ease than any of the philosophers. In contemning the world, they seem to take pains to contemn it; we despise it, without taking the pains to read lessons of morality to make us do it. At least I know I have always looked upon it with contempt, without being at the expense of one serious reflection to oblige me to it. I carry the matter yet farther; was I to choose of two thousand pounds a year or twenty thousand, the first would be my choice. There is something of an unavoidable *embarras* in making what is called a great figure in the world, [it] takes off from the happiness of life; I hate the noise and hurry inseparable from great estates and titles, and look upon both as blessings that ought only to be given to fools, for 'tis only to them that they are blessings. The pretty fellows you speak of, I own, entertain me sometimes; but is it impossible to be diverted with what one despises? I can laugh at a puppet-show; at the same time I know there is nothing in it worth my attention or regard. General notions are generally wrong. Ignorance and folly are thought the best foundations for virtue, as if not knowing what a good wife is was necessary to make one so. I confess that can never be my way of reasoning; as I

always forgive an *injury* when I think it not done out of malice, I can never think myself *obliged* by what is done without design. Give me leave to say it (I know it sounds vain), I know how to make a man of sense happy, but then that man must resolve to contribute something towards it himself. I have so much esteem for you, I should be very sorry to hear you was unhappy, but for the world I would not be the instrument of making you so; which (of the humour you are) is hardly to be avoided if I am your wife. You distrust me—I can neither be easy, nor loved, where I am distrusted. Nor do I believe your passion for me is what you pretend it; at least I am sure was I in love I could not talk as you do. Few women would have spoke so plainly as I have done, but to dissemble is among the things I never do. I take more pains to approve my conduct to myself than to the world; and would not have to accuse myself of a minute's deceit. I wish I loved you enough to devote myself to be for ever miserable, for the pleasure of a day or two's happiness. I cannot resolve upon it. You must think otherwise of me, or not at all.

"I don't enjoin you to burn this letter. I know you will. 'Tis the first I ever writ to one of your sex, and shall be the last. You must never expect another. I resolve against all correspondence of the kind; my resolutions are seldom made, and never broken."

Mr. Wortley, however, still grumbled. He seems to have expected a young lady to do something even more decisive than ask him to marry her. He continued to hesitate and pause. The lady in the comedy says, "What right has a man to intend unless he states his intentions?" and Lady Mary's biographers are entirely of that opinion. They think her exceedingly ill-used, and Mr. Wortley exceedingly to blame. And so it may have been; certainly a love-correspondence is rarely found where activity and intrepidity on the lady's side so much contrasts with quiescence and timidity on the gentleman's. If, however, we could summon him before us, probably Mr. Wortley would have something to answer on his own behalf. It is tolerably plain that he thought Lady Mary too excitable. "Certainly," he

doubtless reasoned, "she is a handsome young lady, and very witty, but beauty and wit are dangerous as well as attractive. Vivacity is delightful; but my esteemed friend Mr. Addison has observed that excessive quickness of parts is not unfrequently the cause of extreme rapidity in action. Lady Mary makes love to me before marriage, and I like it; but may she not make love also to some one else after marriage? and then I shall not like it" Accordingly he writes to her timorously as to her love of pleasure, her love of romantic reading, her occasional toleration of younger gentlemen and quicker admirers. At last, however, he proposed; and, as far as the lady was concerned, there was no objection.

We might have expected, from a superficial view of the facts, that there would have been no difficulty either on the side of her father. Mr. Wortley died one of the richest commoners in England; was of the first standing in society, of good family, and he had apparently, therefore, money to settle and station to offer to his bride. And he did offer both. He was ready to settle an ample sum on Lady Mary, both as his wife and as his widow, and was anxious that, if they married, they should live in a manner suitable to her rank and his prospects. But nevertheless there was a difficulty. The *Tatler* had recently favoured its readers with dissertations upon social ethics not altogether dissimilar to those with which the *Saturday Review* frequently instructs its readers. One of those dissertations\* contained an elaborate exposure of the folly of settling your estate upon your unborn children. The arguments were of a sort very easily imaginable. "Why," it was said, "should you give away that which you have to a person whom you do not know; whom you may never see; whom you may not like when you do see; who may be undutiful, unpleasant, or idiotic? Why, too,

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should each generation surrender its due control over the next? When the family estate is settled, men of the world know that the father's control is gone, for disinterested filial affection is an unfrequent though doubtless possible virtue; but so long as *property* is in suspense, all expectants will be attentive to those who have it in their power to give or not to give it" These arguments had converted Mr Wortley, who is said even to have contributed notes for the article, and they seem to have converted Lady Mary also. She was to have her money, and the most plain-spoken young ladies do not commonly care to argue much about the future provision for their possible children, the subject is always delicate and a little frightful, and, on the whole, must be left to themselves. But Lord Dorchester, her father, felt it his duty to be firm. It is an old saying that "you never know where a man's conscience may turn up," and the advent of ethical feeling was in this case even unusually beyond calculation. Lord Dorchester had never been an anxious father, and was not now going to be a liberal father. He had never cared much about Lady Mary, except in so far as he could himself gain *éclat* by exhibiting her youthful beauty, and he was not now at her marriage about to do at all more than was necessary and decent in his station. It was not therefore apparently probable that he would be irritatingly obstinate respecting the income of his daughter's children. He was so, however. He deemed it a duty to see that "his grandchild never should be a beggar," and, for what reason does not so clearly appear, wished that his eldest male grandchild should be immensely richer than all his other grandchildren. The old feudal aristocrat, often in modern Europe so curiously disguised in the indifferent exterior of a careless man of the world, was, as became him, dictatorial and unalterable upon the duty of founding a family. Though he did not care much for his daughter, he cared much for the position of his daughter's eldest son. He

had probably stumbled on the fundamental truth that "girls were girls, and boys were boys"; and he was inclined to disregard the rule of primogeniture by which he had obtained his marquise, and from which he expected a dukedom.

Mr. Wortley, however, was thorough *l'ami de l'ame*. Eminent in nothing else, eminent at least in the eyes of his wife. He would not give up the doctrine of the *l'ami de l'ame* to obtain Lady Mary. The match was accordingly abandoned, and Lord Dorchester looked out for and found another gentleman whom he proposed to make his son-in-law; for he believed, according to the old morality, "that it was the duty of the parents to find a husband for a daughter, and that when he was found, it was the daughter's duty to marry him." It was as wrong in her to attempt to choose as in him to neglect to seek. Lady Mary was, however, by no means disposed to accept this passive theory of social obligation. She *had* sought and chosen; and to her choice she intended to adhere. The conduct of Mr. Wortley would have offended some ladies, but it rather augmented her admiration. She had exactly that sort of irritable intellect which sets an undue value on new theories of society and morality, and is pleased when others do so too. She thought Mr. Wortley was quite right not to "defraud himself for a possible infant," and admired his constancy and firmness. She determined to risk a step, as she herself said, unjustifiable to her own relatives, but which she nevertheless believed that she could justify to herself. She decided on eloping with Mr. Wortley.

Before, however, taking this audacious leap, she looked a little. Though she did not object to the sacrifice of the customary inheritance of her contingent son, she by no means approved of sacrificing the settlement which Mr. Wortley had undertaken at a prior period of the negotiation to make upon herself. And, according to common sense, she was undoubtedly

judicious. She was going from her father, and fore-going the money which he had promised her ; and therefore it was not reasonable that, by going to her lover, she should forfeit also the money which *he* had promised her. And there is nothing offensive in her mode of expression. "'Tis something odd for a woman that brings nothing to expect anything ; but after the way of my education, I dare not pretend to live but in some degree suitable to it. I had rather die than return to a dependency upon relations I have disengaged. Save me from that fear, if you love me. If you cannot, or think I ought not to expect it, be sincere and tell me so. 'Tis better I should not be yours at all, than, for a short happiness, involve myself in ages of misery. I hope there will never be occasion for this precaution ; but, however, 'tis necessary to make it " But true and rational as all this seems, perhaps it is still truer and still more rational to say that if a woman has not sufficient confidence in her lover to elope with him without a previous promise of a good settlement, she had better not elope with him at all After all, if he declines to make the stipulated settlement, the lady will have either to return to her friends or to marry without it, and she would have the full choice between these satisfactory alternatives, even if she asked no previous promise from her lover At any rate, the intrusion of coarse money among the refined materials of romance is, in this case, even more curious and remarkable than usual.

After some unsuccessful attempts, Lady Mary and Mr. Wortley did elope and did marry, and, after a certain interval, of course, Lord Dorchester received them, notwithstanding their contempt of his authority, into some sort of favour and countenance They had probably saved him money by their irregularity, and economical frailties are rarely judged severely by men of fashion who are benefited by them. Lady Mary, however, was long a little mistrusted by her own relations,

and never seems to have acquired much family influence ; but her marriage was not her only peculiarity, or the only one which impartial relations might dislike

The pair appear to have been for a little while tolerably happy. Lady Mary was excitable, and wanted letters when absent, and attention when present : Mr Wortley was heavy and slow ; could not write letters when away, and seemed torpid in her society when at home. Still, these are common troubles. Common, too, is the matrimonial correspondence upon baby's deficiency in health, and on Mrs Behn's opinion that " the cold bath is the best medicine for weak children." It seems an odd end to a deferential perusal of Latin authors in girlhood, and to a spirited elopement with the preceptor in after years , but the transition is only part of the usual irony of human life

The world, both social and political, into which Lady Mary was introduced by her marriage was singularly calculated to awaken the faculties, to stimulate the intellect, to sharpen the wit, and to harden the heart of an intelligent, witty, and hard-headed woman. The world of London—even the higher world—is now too large to be easily seen, or to be pithily described The elements are so many, their position is so confused, the display of their mutual counteraction is so involved, that many years must pass away before even a very clever woman can thoroughly comprehend it all. She will cease to be young and handsome long ere she does comprehend it And when she at last understands it, it does not seem a fit subject for concise and summary wit Its evident complexity refuses to be condensed into pithy sayings and brilliant *bons mots* It has fallen into the hands of philosophers, with less brains perhaps than the satirists of our fathers, but with more anxiety to tell the whole truth, more toleration for the many-sidedness of the world, with less of sharp conciseness, but, perhaps, with more of useful completeness As are the books, so are the readers People do not wish

to read satire nowadays. The epigrams even of Pope would fall dull and dead upon this serious and investigating time. The folly of the last age affected levity; the folly of this, as we all know, encases itself in ponderous volumes which defy refutation, in elaborate arguments which prove nothing, in theories which confuse the uninstructed, and which irritate the well-informed. The folly of a hundred years since was at least the folly of Vivien, but ours is the folly of Merlin:

“ *You read the book, my pretty Vivien,  
And none can read the text, not even I,  
And none can read the comments but myself—  
Oh, the results are simple!* ”

Perhaps people did not know then as much as they know now: indisputably they knew nothing like so much in a superficial way *about* so many things; but they knew far more correctly where their knowledge began and where it stopped; what they thought and why they thought it they had readier illustrations and more summary phrases; they could say at once what it *came to*, and to what action it should lead.

The London of the eighteenth century was an aristocratic world, which lived to itself, which displayed the virtues and developed the vices of an aristocracy which was under little fear of external control or check, which had emancipated itself from the control of the crown; which had not fallen under the control of the *bourgeoisie*; which saw its own life, and saw that, according to its own maxims, it was good. Public opinion now rules, and it is an opinion which constrains the conduct, and narrows the experience, and dwarfs the violence, and minimizes the frankness of the highest classes, while it diminishes their vices, supports their conscience, and precludes their grossness. There was nothing like this in the last century, especially in the

\* Tennyson “ Merlin and Vivien ”

early part of it. The aristocracy came to town from their remote estates—where they were uncontrolled by any opinion or by any equal society, and where the eccentricities and personalities of each character were fostered and exaggerated—to a London which was like a large county town, in which everybody of rank knew everybody of rank, where the eccentricities of each rural potentate came into picturesque collision with the eccentricities of other rural potentates, where the most minute allusions to the peculiarities and the career of the principal persons were instantly understood, where squibs were on every table, and where satire was in the air. No finer field of social observation could be found for an intelligent and witty woman. Lady Mary understood it at once

Nor was the political life of the last century so unfavourable to the influence and so opposed to the characteristic comprehension of women as our present life. We are now ruled by political discussion and by a popular assembly, by leading articles, and by the House of Commons. But women can scarcely ever compose leaders, and no woman sits in our representative chamber. The whole tide of abstract discussion, which fills our mouths and deafens our ears, the whole complex accumulation of facts and figures to which we refer everything, and which we apply to everything, is quite unfemale. A lady has an insight into what she sees; but how will this help her with the case of the *Trent*, with the proper structure of a representative chamber, with Indian finance or parliamentary reform? Women are clever, but cleverness of itself is nothing at present. A sharp Irish writer described himself "as bothered entirely by the want of preliminary information"; women are in the same difficulty now. Their nature may hereafter change, as some sanguine advocates suggest. But the visible species certainly have not the intellectual providence to acquire the vast stores of dry information which alone can enable them to judge adequately of our

present controversies. We are ruled by a machinery of oratory and discussion, in which women have no share, and which they hardly comprehend: we are engaged on subjects which need an arduous learning, to which they have no pretensions.

In the last century much of this was very different. The court still counted for much in English politics. The House of Commons was the strongest power in the State machine, but it was not so immeasurably the strongest power as now. It was absolutely supreme within its sphere, but that sphere was limited. It could absolutely control the money, and thereby the policy, of the State. Whether there should be peace or war, excise or no excise, it could and did despotically determine. It was supreme in its choice of *measures*. But, on the other hand, it had only a secondary influence in the choice of *persons*. Who the Prime Minister was to be, was a question not only theoretically determinable, but in fact determined by the Sovereign. The House of Commons could despotically impose two conditions: first, that the Prime Minister should be a man of sufficient natural ability, and sufficient parliamentary experience, to conduct the business of his day, secondly, that he should adopt the policy which the nation wished. But, subject to a conformity with these prerequisites, the selection of the king was nearly uncontrolled. Sir Robert Walpole was the greatest master of parliamentary tactics and political business in his generation; he was a statesman of wide views and consummate dexterity; but these intellectual gifts, even joined to immense parliamentary experience, were not alone sufficient to make him and to keep him Prime Minister of England. He also maintained, during two reigns, a complete system of court-strategy. During the reign of George II. he kept a *queen-watcher*. Lord Hervey, one of the cleverest men in England, the keenest observer, perhaps, in England, was induced, by very dexterous management, to remain at court during many years—to observe

the queen, to hint to the queen, to remove wrong impressions from the queen, to confirm the Walpolese predilections of the queen, to report every incident to Sir Robert. The records of politics tell us few stranger tales than that it should have been necessary for the Sir Robert Peel of the age to hire a subordinate as safe as Eldon, and as witty as Canning, for the sole purpose of managing a clever German woman, to whom the selection of a Prime Minister was practically entrusted. Nor was this the only court-campaign which Sir Robert had to conduct, or in which he was successful. Lady Mary, who hated him much, has satirically described the foundation upon which his court favour rested during the reign of George I. :

“ The new court with all their train was arrived before I left the country The Duke of Marlborough was returned in a sort of triumph, with the apparent merit of having suffered for his fidelity to the succession, and was reinstated in his office of general, etc In short, all people who had suffered any hardship or disgrace during the late ministry would have it believed that it was occasioned by their attachment to the House of Hanover Even Mr Walpole, who had been sent to the Tower for a piece of bribery proved upon him, was called a confessor to the cause But he had another piece of good luck that yet more contributed to his advancement, he had a very handsome sister, whose folly had lost her reputation in London ; but the yet greater folly of Lord Townshend, who happened to be a neighbour in Norfolk to Mr Walpole, had occasioned his being drawn in to marry her some months before the queen died

“ Lord Townshend had that sort of understanding which commonly makes men honest in the first part of their lives ; they follow the instructions of their tutor, and, till somebody thinks it worth their while to show them a new path, go regularly on in the road where they are set. Lord Townshend had then been many years an excellent husband to a sober wife, a kind master to all his servants and dependents, a serviceable relation wherever it was in his power, and followed the instinct of nature in being fond

of his children. Such a sort of behaviour, without any glaring absurdity, either in prodigality or avarice, always gains a man the reputation of reasonable and honest, and this was his character when the Earl of Godolphin sent him envoy to the States, not doubting but he would be faithful to his orders, without giving himself the trouble of criticizing on them, which is what all ministers wish in an envoy. Robotun, a French refugee (secretary to Bernstoff, one of the Elector of Hanover's ministers), happened then to be at the Hague, and was civilly received at Lord Townshend's, who treated him at his table with the English hospitality, and he was charmed with a reception which his birth and education did not entitle him to. Lord Townshend was recalled when the queen changed her ministry, his wife died, and he retired into the country, where (as I have said before) Walpole had art enough to make him marry his sister Dolly. At that time, I believe, he did not propose much more advantage by the match than to get rid of a girl that lay heavy on his hands.

"When King George ascended the throne, he was surrounded by all his German ministers and playfellows, male and female. Baron Goritz was the most considerable among them both for birth and fortune. He had managed the king's treasury thirty years with the utmost fidelity and economy, and had the true German honesty, being a plain, sincere, and unambitious man. Bernstoff, the secretary, was of a different turn. He was avaricious, artful, and designing, and had got his share in the king's councils by bribing his women. Robotun was employed in these matters, and had the sanguine ambition of a Frenchman. He resolved there should be an English ministry of his choosing, and, knowing none of them personally but Townshend, he had not failed to recommend him to his master, and his master to the king, as the only proper person for the important post of Secretary of State, and he entered upon that office with universal applause, having at that time a very popular character, which he might possibly have retained for ever if he had not been entirely governed by his wife and her brother R. Walpole, whom he immediately advanced to be paymaster, esteemed a post of exceeding profit, and very necessary for his indebted estate."

And it is indisputable that Lord Townshend, who thought he was a very great statesman, and who began as the patron of Sir Robert Walpole, nevertheless was only his court-agent—the manager on his behalf of the king and of the king's mistresses.

We need not point out at length, for the passage we have cited of itself indicates, how well suited this sort of politics is to the comprehension and to the pen of a keen-sighted and witty woman.

Nor was the court the principal improver of the London society of the age. The House of Commons was then a part of society. This separate, isolated, aristocratic world, of which we have spoken, had an almost undisputed command of both Houses in the Legislature. The letter of the constitution did not give it them, and no law appointed that it should be so. But the aristocratic class were by far the most educated, by far the most respected, by far the most *eligible* part of the nation. Even in the boroughs, where there was universal suffrage, or something near it, they were the favourites. Accordingly, they gave the tone to the House of Commons ; they required the small community of members who did not belong to their order to conform as far as they could to their usages, and to guide themselves by their code of morality and of taste. In the main the House of Commons obeyed these injunctions, and it was repaid by being incorporated within the aristocratic world : it became not only the council of the nation, but the debating-club of fashion. That which was "received" modified the recipient. The remains of the aristocratic society, wherever we find them, are penetrated not only with an aristocratic but with a political spirit. They breathe a sort of atmosphere of politics. In the London of the present day, the vast miscellaneous *bourgeois* London, we all know that this is not so. "In the country," said a splenetic observer, "people talk politics ; at London dinners you talk nothing ; between two pillars of crinoline you eat and

are resigned." A hundred and fifty years ago, as far as our rather ample materials inform us, people in London talked politics just as they now talk politics in Worcestershire ; and being on the spot, and cooped up with politicians in a small social world, their talk was commonly better. They knew the people of whom they spoke, even if they did not know the subjects with which they were concerned.

No element is better fitted to counteract the characteristic evil of an aristocratic society. The defect of such societies in all times has been frivolity. All talk has tended to become gossip ; it has ceased to deal with important subjects, and has devoted itself entirely to unimportant incidents. Whether the Duc de — has more or less prevailed with the Marquise de — is a sort of common form into which any details may be fitted, and any names inserted. The frivolities of gallantry—never very important save to some woman who has long been dead—fill the records of all aristocracies who lived under a despotism, who had no political authority, no daily political cares. The aristocracy of England in the last century was, at any rate, exempt from *this* reproach. There is in the records of it not only an intellectuality, which would prove little—for every clever describer, by the subtleties of his language and the arrangement of his composition, gives a sort of intellectuality even to matters which have no pretension to it themselves—but likewise a pervading medium of political discussion. The very language in which they are written is the language of political business. Horace Walpole was certainly by nature no politician and no orator ; yet no discerning critic can read a page of his voluminous remains without feeling that the writer has through life lived with politicians and talked with politicians. A keen, observant mind, not naturally political, but capable of comprehending and viewing any subject which was brought before it, has chanced to have this particular subject—politics—presented to

it for a lifetime ; and all its delineations, all its efforts, all its thoughts, reflect it, and are coloured by it. In all the records of the eighteenth century the tonic of business is seen to combat the relaxing effect of habitual luxury.

This element, too, is favourable to a clever woman. The more you can put before such a person the greater she will be ; the less her world, the less she is. If you place the most keen-sighted lady in the midst of the pure futilities and unmitigated flirtations of an aristocracy, she will sink to the level of those elements, and will scarcely seem to wish for anything more, or to be competent for anything higher. But if she is placed in an intellectual atmosphere, in which political or other important subjects are currently passing, you will probably find that she can talk better upon them than you can, without your being able to explain whence she derived either her information or her talent.

The subjects, too, which were discussed in the political society of the last age were not so inscrutable to women as our present subjects ; and even when there were great difficulties they were more on a level with men in the discussion of them than they now are. It was no disgrace to be destitute of preliminary information at a time in which there were no accumulated stores from which such information could be derived. A lightening element of female influence is therefore to be found through much of the politics of the eighteenth century.

Lady Mary entered easily into all this world, both social and political. She had beauty for the fashionable, satire for the witty, knowledge for the learned, and intelligence for the politician. She was not too refined to shrink from what we now consider the coarseness of that time. Many of her verses themselves are scarcely adapted for our decorous pages. Perhaps the following give no unfair idea of her ordinary state of mind :

## “ TOWN ECLOGUES

## “ ROXANA ; OR, THE DRAWING-ROOM

“ Roxana, from the court retiring late,  
 Sigh'd her soft sorrows at St. James's Gate.  
 Such heavy thoughts lay brooding in her breast,  
 Not her own chairmen with more weight oppress'd ;  
 They groan the cruel load they're doom'd to bear ;  
 She in these gentle sounds express'd her care

“ ‘ Was it for this that I these roses wear ?  
 For this new-set the jewels for my hair ?  
 Ah ! Princess ! with what zeal have I pursued !  
 Almost forgot the duty of a prude  
 Thinking I never could attend too soon,  
 I've miss'd my prayers, to get me dress'd by noon  
 For thee, ah ! what for thee did I resign !  
 My pleasures, passions, all that e'er was mine.  
 I sacrific'd both modesty and ease,  
 Left operas and went to filthy plays ;  
*Double-entendres* shock my tender ear ,  
 Yet even this for thee I choose to bear.  
 In glowing youth, when nature bids be gay,  
 And every joy of life before me lay,  
 By honour prompted, and by pride restrain'd,  
 The pleasures of the young my soul disdain'd .  
 Sermons I sought, and with a mien severe  
 Censur'd my neighbours, and said daily prayer

“ ‘ Alas ! how chang'd—with the same sermon-mien  
 That once I pray'd, the “ What d'ye call't ” \* I've seen  
 Ah ! cruel Princess, for thy sake I've lost  
 That reputation which so dear had cost  
 I, who avoided every public place,  
 When bloom and beauty bade me show my face,  
 Now near thee constant every night abide  
 With never-failing duty by thy side ,  
 Myself and daughters standing on a row,  
 To all the foreigners a goodly show !  
 Oft had your drawing-room been sadly thin,  
 And merchants' wives close by the chair been seen,

\* A mock-tragedy by Gay

Had not I amply filled the empty space,  
 And saved your highness from the dire disgrace  
 ' Yet Coquetilla's artifice prevails,  
 When all my merit and my duty fails ;  
 That Coquetilla, whose deluding airs  
 Corrupt our virgins, still our youth ensnares ;  
 So sunk her character, so lost her fame,  
 Scarce visited before your highness came .  
 Yet for the bed-chamber 'tis her you choose,  
 When zeal and fame and virtue you refuse  
 Ah ! worthy choice ! not one of all your train  
 Whom censure blasts not, and dishonours stain !  
 Let the nice hind now suckle dirty pigs,  
 And the proud pea-hen hatch the cuckoo's eggs !  
 Let Iris leave her paint and own her age,  
 And grave Suffolk a wed a giddy page !  
 A greater miracle is daily view'd,  
 A virtuous Princess with a court so lewd  
 " ' I know thee, Court ! with all thy treach'rous wiles,  
 Thy false caresses and undoing smiles !  
 Ah ! Princess, learn'd in all the courtly arts,  
 To cheat our hopes, and yet to gain our hearts !  
 " ' Large lovely bribes are the great statesman's aim ;  
 And the neglected patriot follows fame.  
 The Prince is ogled, some the King pursue ;  
 But your Roxana only follows you.  
 Despis'd Roxana, cease, and try to find  
 Some other, since the Princess proves unkind :  
 Perhaps it is not hard to find at court,  
 If not a greater, a more firm support.' "

There was every kind of rumour as to Lady Mary's own conduct, and we have no means of saying whether any of these rumours were true. There is no evidence against her which is worthy of the name. So far as can be proved, she was simply a gay, witty, bold-spoken, handsome woman, who made many enemies by unscrupulous speech, and many friends by unscrupulous flirtation. We may believe, but we cannot prove, that she found her husband tedious, and was dissatisfied that his slow, methodical, *borné* mind made so little progress in the political world, and understood so little of what

really passed there. Unquestionably she must have much preferred talking to Lord Hervey to talking with Mr. Montagu. But we must not credit the idle scandals of a hundred years since, because they may have been true, or because they appear not inconsistent with the characters of those to whom they relate. There were legends against every attractive and fashionable woman in that age, and most of the legends were doubtless exaggerations and inventions. We cannot know the truth of such matters now, and it would hardly be worth searching into if we could ; but the important fact is certain, Lady Mary lived in a world in which the worst rumours were greedily told, and often believed, about her and others ; and the moral refinement of a woman must always be impaired by such a contact.

Lady Mary was so unfortunate as to incur the partial dislike of one of the great recorders of that age, and the bitter hostility of the other. She was no favourite with Horace Walpole, and the bitter enemy of Pope. The first is easily explicable Horace Walpole never loved his father, but compensated himself by hating his father's enemies No one connected with the opposition to Sir Robert is spared by his son, if there be a fair opportunity for unfavourable insinuation. Mr. Wortley Montagu was the very man for a grave mistake. He made the very worst that could be made in that age He joined the party of constitutional exiles on the Opposition bench, who had no real objection to the policy of Sir Robert Walpole, who, when they had a chance, adopted that policy themselves ; who were discontented because they had no power, and he had all the power. Probably too, being a man eminently respectable, Mr. Montagu was frightened at Sir Robert's unscrupulous talk and not very scrupulous actions. At any rate, he opposed Sir Robert ; and thence many a little observation of Horace Walpole's against Lady Mary.

Why Pope and Lady Mary quarrelled is a question

on which much discussion has been expended, and on which a judicious German professor might even now compose an interesting and exhaustive monograph. A curt English critic will be more apt to ask, "Why they should *not* have quarrelled?" We know that Pope quarrelled with almost every one; we know that Lady Mary quarrelled or half quarrelled with most of her acquaintances. Why, then, should they not have quarrelled with one another?

It is certain that they were very intimate at one time; for Pope wrote to her some of the most pompous letters of compliment in the language. And the more intimate they were to begin with, the more sure they were to be enemies in the end. Human nature will not endure that sort of proximity. An irritable, vain poet, who always fancies that people are trying to hurt him, whom no argument could convince that every one is not perpetually thinking about him, cannot long be friendly with a witty woman of unscrupulous tongue, who spares no one, who could sacrifice a good friend for a bad *bon mot*, who thinks of the person whom she is addressing, not of those about whom she is speaking. The natural relation of the two is that of victim and torturer, and no other will long continue. There appear also to have been some money matters (of all things in the world) between the two. Lady Mary was entrusted by Pope with some money to use in speculation during the highly fashionable panic which derives its name from the South-Sea Bubble,—and as of course it was lost, Pope was very angry. Another story goes that Pope made serious love to Lady Mary, and that she laughed at him, upon which a very personal, and not always very correct, controversy has arisen as to the probability or improbability of Pope's exciting a lady's feelings. Lord Byron took part in it with his usual acuteness and incisiveness, and did not leave the discussion more decent than he found it. Pope doubtless was deformed, and had not the large red health that

uncivilized women admire ; yet a clever lady might have taken a fancy to him, for the little creature knew what he was saying. There is, however, no evidence that Lady Mary did so. We only know that there was a sudden coolness or quarrel between them, and that it was the beginning of a long and bitter hatred.

In their own times Pope's sensitive disposition probably gave Lady Mary a great advantage. Her tongue perhaps gave him more pain than his pen gave her. But in later times she has fared the worst. What between Pope's sarcasms and Horace Walpole's anecdotes, Lady Mary's reputation has suffered very considerably. As we have said, her offences are *non proven* ; there is no evidence to convict her, but she is likely to be condemned upon the general doctrine that a person who is accused of much is probably guilty of something.

During many years Lady Mary continued to live a distinguished fashionable and social life, with a single remarkable break. This interval was her journey to Constantinople. The powers that then were, thought fit to send Mr. Wortley as ambassador to Constantinople, and his wife accompanied him. During that visit she kept a journal, and wrote sundry real letters, out of which, after her return, she composed a series of unreal letters as to all she saw and did in Turkey, and on the journey there and back, which were published, and which are still amusing, if not always select, reading. The Sultan was not then the "dying man", he was the "Grand Turk". He was not simply a potentate to be counted with, but a power to be feared. The appearance of a Turkish army on the Danube had in that age much the same effect as the appearance of a Russian army now. It was an object of terror and dread. A mission at Constantinople was not then a *bureau* for interference in Turkey, but a serious office for transacting business with a great European power. A European ambassador at Constantinople now presses

on the Government there impracticable reforms ; he then asked for useful aid. Lady Mary was evidently impressed by the power of the country in which she sojourned ; and we observe in her letters evident traces of the notion that the Turk was the dread of Christendom,—which is singular now, when the Turk is its *protégé*.

Lady Mary had another advantage too. Many sorts of books make steady progress ; a scientific treatise published now is sure to be fuller and better than one on the same subject written long ago. But with books of travel in a stationary country the presumption is the contrary. In that case the old book is probably the better book. The first traveller writes out a plain, straightforward description of the most striking objects with which he meets , he believes that his readers know nothing of the country of which he is writing, for till he visited it he probably knew nothing himself ; and, if he is sensible, he describes simply and clearly all which most impresses him He has no motive for not dwelling upon the principal things, and most likely will do so, as they are probably the most conspicuous. The second traveller is not so fortunate. He is always in terror of the traveller who went before. He fears the criticism,—“ This is all very well, *but* we knew the whole of it before. No. I said that at page 103.” In consequence he is timid. He picks and skips. He fancies that you are acquainted with all which is great and important, and he dwells, for your good and to your pain, upon that which is small and unimportant. For ordinary readers no result can be more fatal. They perhaps never read—they certainly do not remember—anything upon the subject. The curious *minutiæ*, so elaborately set forth, are quite useless, for they have not the general framework in which to store them. Not knowing much of the first traveller’s work, that of the second is a supplement to a treatise with which they are unacquainted. In consequence they do not read it.

Lady Mary made good use of her position in the front of the herd of tourists. She told us what she saw in Turkey—all the best of what she saw, and all the most remarkable things—and told it very well.

Nor was this work the only fruit of her Turkish travels ; she brought home the notion of inoculation. Like most improvers, she was roughly spoken to. Medical men were angry because the practice was not in their books, and conservative men were cross at the agony of a new idea. Religious people considered it wicked to have a disease which Providence did not think fit to send you ; and simple people “did not like to make themselves ill of their own accord ” She triumphed, however, over all obstacles ; inoculation, being really found to lengthen life and save complexions, before long became general

One of the first patients upon whom Lady Mary tried the novelty was her own son, and many considerate people thought it “worthy of observation ” that he turned out a scamp. When he ran away from school, the mark of inoculation, then rare, was used to describe him, and after he was recovered, he never did anything which was good. His case seems to have been the common one in which Nature (as we speak) requites herself for the strong-headedness of several generations by the weakness of one. His father’s and his mother’s family had been rather able for some generations ; the latter remarkably so. But this boy had always a sort of practical imbecility. He was not stupid, but he never did anything right. He exemplified another curious trait of Nature’s practice Mr. Montagu was obstinate, though sensible ; Lady Mary was flighty, though clever. Nature combined the defects. Young Edward Montagu was both obstinate and flighty. The only pleasure he can ever have given his parents was the pleasure of *feeling* their own wisdom. He showed that they were right before marriage in not settling the paternal property upon him, for he ran through every

shilling he possessed. He was not sensible enough to keep his property, and just not fool enough for the law to take it from him.

After her return from Constantinople, Lady Mary continued to lead the same half-gay and half-literary life as before ; but at last she did not like it. Various ingenious inquirers into antiquated *minutiæ* have endeavoured, without success, to discover reasons of detail which might explain her dissatisfaction. They have suggested that some irregular love-affair was unprosperous, and hinted that she and her husband were not on good terms. The love-affair, however, when looked for, cannot be found ; and though she and her husband would appear to have been but distantly related, they never had any great quarrel which we know of. Neither seems to have been fitted to give the other much pleasure, and each had the fault of which the other was most impatient. Before marriage Lady Mary had charmed Mr. Montagu, but she had also frightened him ; after marriage she frightened, but did not charm him. He was formal and composed ; she was flighty and *outrée*. "What *will* she do next ?" was doubtless the poor man's daily feeling ; and "Will he ever do anything ?" was probably also hers. Torpid business, which is always going on, but which never seems to come to anything, is simply aggravating to a clever woman. Even the least impatient lady can hardly endure a perpetual process for which there is little visible and nothing theatrical to show ; and Lady Mary was by no means the least impatient. But there was no abrupt quarrel between the two ; and a husband and wife who have lived together more than twenty years can generally manage to continue to live together during a second twenty years. These reasons of detail are scarcely the reasons for Lady Mary's wishing to break away from the life to which she had so long been used. Yet there was clearly some reason, for Lady Mary went abroad, and stayed there during many years.

We believe that the cause was not special and peculiar to the case, but general, and due to the invariable principles of human nature, at all times and everywhere. If historical experience proves anything, it proves that the earth is not adapted for a life of mere intellectual pleasure. The life of a brute on earth, though bad, is possible. It is not even difficult to many persons to destroy the higher part of their nature by a continual excess in sensual pleasure. It is even more easy and possible to dull all the soul and most of the mind by a vapid accumulation of torpid comfort. Many of the middle classes spend their whole lives in a constant series of petty pleasures, and an undeviating pursuit of small material objects. The gross pursuit of pleasure, and the tiresome pursuit of petty comfort, are quite suitable to such "a being as man in such a world as the present one." What is not possible is to combine the pursuit of pleasure and the enjoyment of comfort with the characteristic pleasures of a strong mind. If you wish for luxury, you must not nourish the inquisitive instinct. The great problems of human life are in the air, they are without us in the life we see, within us in the life we feel. A quick intellect feels them in a moment. It says, "Why am I here? What is pleasure, that I desire it? What is comfort, that I seek it? What are carpets and tables? What is the lust of the eye? What is the pride of life, that they should satisfy me? I was not made for such things. I hate them, because I have liked them; I loathe them, because it seems that there is nothing else for me." An impatient woman's intellect comes to this point in a moment; it says, "Society is good, but I have seen society. What is the use of talking, or hearing *bons mots*? I have done both till I am tired of doing either. I have laughed till I have no wish to laugh again, and made others laugh till I have hated them for being such fools. As for instruction, I have seen the men of genius of my time; and they tell me nothing,—nothing of what I

want to know. They are choked with intellectual frivolities. They cannot say ' whence I came, and whither I go ' What do they know of themselves ? It is not from literary people that we can learn anything ; more likely, they will copy, or try to copy, the manners of lords, and make ugly love, in bad imitation of those who despise them." Lady Mary felt this, as we believe. She had seen all the world of England, and it did not *satisfy*. She turned abroad, not in pursuit of definite good, nor from fear of particular evil, but from a vague wish for some great change—from a wish to escape from a life which harassed the soul, but did not calm it ; which awakened the intellect without answering its questions.

She lived abroad for more than twenty years, at Avignon and Venice and elsewhere ; and during that absence she wrote the letters which compose the greater part of her works. And there is no denying that they are good letters. The art of note-writing may become classical—it is for the present age to provide models of that sort of composition—but letters have perished. Nobody but a bore now takes pains enough to make them pleasant ; and the only result of a bore's pains is to make them unpleasant. The correspondence of the present day is a continual labour without any visible achievement. The dying penny-a-liner said with emphasis : " That which I have written has perished." We might all say so of the mass of petty letters we write. They are a heap of small atoms, each with some interest individually, but with no interest as a whole ; all the items concern us, but they all add up to nothing. In the last century, cultivated people who sat down to write a letter took pains to have something to say, and took pains to say it. The postage was perhaps nine-pence , and it would be impudent to make a correspondent pay ninepence for nothing. Still more impudent was it, *after* having made him pay ninepence, to give him the additional pain of making out what was half

expressed. People, too, wrote to one another then, not unfrequently, who had long been separated, and who required much explanation and many details to make the life of each intelligible to the other. The correspondence of the nineteenth century is like a series of telegrams with amplified headings. There is not more than one idea ; and that idea comes soon, and is soon over. The best correspondence of the last age is rather like a good light article,—in which the points are studiously made,—in which the effort to make them is studiously concealed,—in which a series of selected circumstances is set forth,—in which you feel, but are not told, that the principle of the writer's selection was to make his composition pleasant.

In letter-writing of this kind Lady Mary was very skilful. She has the highest merit of letter-writing—she is concise without being affected. Fluency, which a great orator pronounced to be the curse of orators, is at least equally the curse of writers. There are many people, many ladies especially, who can write letters at any length, in any number, and at any time. We may be quite sure that the letters so written are not good letters. Composition of any sort implies consideration ; you must see where you are going before you can go straight, or can pick your steps as you go. On the other hand, too much consideration is unfavourable to the ease of letter-writing, and perhaps of all writing. A letter too much studied wants flow ; it is a museum of hoarded sentences. Each sentence sounds effective ; but the whole composition wants vitality. It was written with the memory instead of the mind ; and every reader feels the effect, though only the critical reader can detect the cause. Lady Mary understood all this. She said what she had to say in words that were always graphic and always sufficiently good, but she avoided curious felicity. Her expressions seemed choice, but not chosen.

At the end of her life Lady Mary pointed a subordinate

but not a useless moral. The masters of mundane ethics observe that "you should stay in the world, or stay out of the world" Lady Mary did neither. She went out and tried to return. Horace Walpole thus describes the result: "Lady Mary Wortley is arrived; I have seen her, I think her avarice, her art, and her vivacity are all increased. Her dress, like her language, is a *galimatias* of several countries, the groundwork rags, and the embroidery nastiness. She needs no cap, no handkerchief, no gown, no petticoat, and no shoes. An old black laced hood represents the first; the fur of a horseman's coat, which replaces the third, serves for the second, a dimity petticoat is deputy and officiates for the fourth; and slippers act the part of the last. When I was at Florence, and she was expected there, we were drawing *sortes Virgilianas* for her; we literally drew

'*Insanam vatem aspicies*'

It would have been a stranger prophecy now even than it was then" There is a description of what the favourite of society becomes after leaving it for years, and after indulging eccentricities for years! There is a commentary on the blunder of exposing yourself in your old age to young people, to whom you have always been a tradition and a name! Horace Walpole doubtless painted up a few trivialities a little. But one of the traits is true. Lady Mary lived before the age in which people waste half their lives in washing the whole of their persons

Lady Mary did not live long after her return to England. Horace Walpole's letter is written on the 2nd February 1762, and she died on the 21st August in the same year. Her husband had died just before her return, and perhaps, after so many years, she would not have returned unless he had done so. *Requiescat in pace*, for she quarrelled all her life.

## WORDSWORTH, TENNYSON, AND BROWNING ; OR, PURE, ORNATE, AND GROTESQUE ART IN ENGLISH POETRY.\*

(1864)

WE couple these two books together, not because of their likeness, for they are as dissimilar as books can be ; nor on account of the eminence of their authors, for in general two great authors are too much for one essay ; but because they are the best possible illustration of something we have to say upon poetical art—because they may give to it life and freshness. The accident of contemporaneous publication has here brought together two books very characteristic of modern art, and we want to show how they are characteristic.

Neither English poetry nor English criticism have ever recovered the *eruption* which they both made at the beginning of this century into the fashionable world. The poems of Lord Byron were received with an avidity that resembles our present avidity for sensation novels, and were read by a class which at present reads little but such novels. Old men who remember those days may be heard to say “We hear nothing of poetry nowadays, it seems quite down.” And “down” it certainly is, if for poetry it be a descent to be no longer the favourite excitement of the more frivolous part of

\* *Enoch Arden, etc.* By Alfred Tennyson, D C L, Poet Laureate  
*Dramatis Personæ* By Robert Browning

the "upper" world. That stimulating poetry is now little read. A stray schoolboy may still be detected in a wild admiration for the "Giaour" or the "Corsair" (and it is suitable to his age, and he should not be reproached for it), but the *real* posterity—the quiet students of a past literature—never read them or think of them. A line or two linger on the memory, a few telling strokes of occasional and felicitous energy are quoted, but this is all. As wholes, these exaggerated stories were worthless; they taught nothing, and therefore they are forgotten. If nowadays a dismal poet were, like Byron, to lament the fact of his birth, and to hint that he was too good for the world, the *Saturday Reviewers* would say that "they doubted if he *was* too good; that a sulky poet was a questionable addition to a tolerable world; that he need not have been born, as far as they were concerned." Doubtless, there is much in Byron besides his dismal exaggeration, but it was that exaggeration which made "the sensation" which gave him a wild moment of dangerous fame. As so often happens, the cause of his momentary fashion is the cause also of his lasting oblivion. Moore's former reputation was less excessive, yet it has not been more permanent. The prettiness of a few songs preserves the memory of his name, but as a poet to *read* he is forgotten. There is nothing to read in him; no exquisite thought, no sublime feeling, no consummate description of true character. Almost the sole result of the poetry of that time is the harm which it has done. It degraded for a time the whole character of the art. It said by practice, by a most efficient and successful practice, that it was the aim, the *duty* of poets, to catch the attention of the passing, the fashionable, the busy world. If a poem "fell dead," it was nothing; it was composed to please the "London" of the year, and if that London did not like it, why, it had failed. It fixed upon the minds of a whole generation, it engraved in popular memory and tradition, a vague conviction that

poetry is but one of the many *amusements* for the enjoying classes, for the lighter hours of all classes. The mere notion, the bare idea, that poetry is a deep thing, a teaching thing, the most surely and wisely elevating of human things, is even now to the coarse public mind nearly unknown.

As was the fate of poetry, so inevitably was that of criticism. The science that expounds which poetry is good and which is bad, is dependent for its popular reputation on the popular estimate of poetry itself. The critics of that day had *a* day, which is more than can be said for some since; they professed to tell the fashionable world in what books it would find new pleasure, and therefore they were read by the fashionable world. Byron counted the critic and poet equal. The *Edinburgh Review* penetrated among the young, and into places of female resort where it does not go now. As people ask, "Have you read *Henry Dunbar*? and what do you think of it?" so they then asked, "Have you read the 'Giaour'? and what do you think of it?" Lord Jeffrey, a shrewd judge of the world, employed himself in telling it what to think; not so much what it ought to think, as what at bottom it did think, and so by dexterous sympathy with current society he gained contemporary fame and power. Such fame no critic must hope for now. His articles will not penetrate where the poems themselves do not penetrate. When poetry was noisy, criticism was loud, now poetry is a still small voice, and criticism must be smaller and stiller. As the function of such criticism was limited, so was its subject. For the great and (as time now proves) the permanent part of the poetry of his time—for Shelley and for Wordsworth—Lord Jeffrey had but one word. He said " 'It won't do'" And it will not do to amuse a drawing-room.

\* The first words in Lord Jeffrey's celebrated review of the "Excursion" were, "This will never do."

The doctrine that poetry is a light amusement for idle hours, a metrical species of sensational novel, did not indeed become popular without gainsayers. Thirty years ago, Mr. Carlyle most rudely contradicted it. But perhaps this is about all that he has done. He has denied, but he has not disproved. He has contradicted the floating paganism, but he has not founded the deep religion. All about and around us a *faith* in poetry struggles to be extricated, but it is not extricated. Some day, at the touch of the true word, the whole confusion will by magic cease; the broken and shapeless notions will cohere and crystallize into a bright and true theory. But this cannot be yet.

But though no complete theory of the poetic art as yet be possible for us, though perhaps only our children's children will be able to speak on this subject with the assured confidence which belongs to accepted truth, yet something of some certainty may be stated on the easier elements, and something that will throw light on these two new books. But it will be necessary to assign reasons, and the assigning of reasons is a dry task. Years ago, when criticism only tried to show how poetry could be made a good amusement, it was not impossible that criticism itself should be amusing. But now it must at least be serious, for we believe that poetry is a serious and a deep thing.

There should be a word in the language of literary art to express what the word "picturesque" expresses for the fine arts. *Picturesque* means fit to be put into a picture; we want a word *literatesque*, "fit to be put into a book." An artist goes through a hundred different country scenes, rich with beauties, charms, and merits, but he does not paint any of them. He leaves them alone, he idles on till he finds the hundred-and-first—a scene which many observers would not think much of, but which *he* knows by virtue of his art will look well on canvas, and this he paints, and preserves. Susceptible observers, though not artists, feel this quality

too ; they say of a scene, " How picturesque ! " meaning by this a quality distinct from that of beauty, or sublimity, or grandeur—meaning to speak not only of the scene as it is in itself, but also of its fitness for imitation by art ; meaning not only that it is good, but that its goodness is such as ought to be transferred to paper ; meaning not simply that it fascinates, but also that its fascination is such as ought to be copied by man. A fine and insensible instinct has put language to this subtle use ; it expresses an idea without which fine-art criticism could not go on, and it is very natural that the language of pictorial art should be better supplied with words than that of literary criticism, for the eye was used before the mind, and language embodies primitive sensuous ideas, long ere it expresses, or need express, abstract and literary ones.

The reason why a landscape is " picturesque " is often said to be, that such landscape represents an " idea." But this explanation, though in the minds of some who use it it is near akin to the truth, fails to explain that truth to those who did not know it before ; the word " idea " is so often used in these subjects when people do not know anything else to say ; it represents so often a kind of intellectual insolvency, when philosophers are at their wits' end, that shrewd people will never readily on any occasion give it credit for meaning anything. A wise explainer must, therefore, look out for other words to convey what he has to say. *Landscapes*, like everything else in nature, divide themselves as we look at them into a sort of rude classification. We go down a river, for example, and we see a hundred landscapes on both sides of it, resembling one another in much, yet differing in something ; with trees here, and a farmhouse there, and shadows on one side, and a deep pool far on, a collection of circumstances most familiar in themselves, but making a perpetual novelty by the magic of their various combinations. We travel so for miles and hours, and then we come

to a scene which also has these various circumstances and adjuncts, but which combines them best, which makes the best whole of them, which shows them in their best proportion at a single glance before the eye. Then we say: "This is the place to paint the river; this is the picturesque point!" Or, if not artists or critics of art, we feel without analysis or examination that somehow this bend or sweep of the river shall in future *be the river to us*: that it is the image of it which we will retain in our mind's eye, by which we will remember it, which we will call up when we want to describe or think of it. Some fine countries, some beautiful rivers, have not this picturesque quality: they give us elements of beauty, but they do not combine them together, we go on for a time delighted, but *after* a time somehow we get wearied, we feel that we are taking in nothing and learning nothing; we get no collected image before our mind; we see the accidents and circumstances of that sort of scenery, but the summary scene we do not see, we find *disjecta membra*, but no form; various and many and faulty approximations are displayed in succession; but the absolute perfection in that country's or river's scenery—its *type*—is withheld. We go away from such places in part delighted, but in part baffled, we have been puzzled by pretty things; we have beheld a hundred different inconsistent specimens of the same sort of beauty; but the rememberable idea, the full development, the characteristic individuality of it, we have not seen.

We find the same sort of quality in all parts of painting. We see a portrait of a person we know, and we say, "It is like—yes, like, of course, but it is not *the man*;" we feel it could not be any one else, but still, somehow it fails to bring home to us the individual as we know him to be. *He* is not there. An accumulation of features like his are painted, but his essence is not painted; an approximation more or less excellent is

given, but the characteristic expression, the *typical* form, of the man is withheld.

Literature—the painting of words—has the same quality, but wants the analogous word. The word “*literatesque*” would mean, if we possessed it, that perfect combination in *subject-matter* of literature, which suits the *art* of literature. We often meet people, and say of them, sometimes meaning well and sometimes ill: “How well so-and-so would do in a book!” Such people are by no means the best people; but they are the most effective people—the most rememberable people. Frequently, when we first know them, we like them because they explain to us so much of our experience; we have known many people “like that,” in one way or another, but we did not seem to understand them; they were nothing to us, for their traits were indistinct; we forgot them, for they hitched on to nothing, and we could not classify them. But when we see the *type* of the genus, at once we seem to comprehend its character, the inferior specimens are explained by the perfect embodiment, the approximations are definable when we know the ideal to which they draw near. There are an infinite number of classes of human beings, but in each of these classes there is a distinctive type which, if we could expand it in words, would define the class. We cannot expand it in formal terms any more than a landscape, or a species of landscape; but we have an art, an art of words, which can draw it. Travellers and others often bring home, in addition to their long journals—which, though so living to them, are so dead, so inanimate, so undescriptive to all else—a pen-and-ink sketch, rudely done very likely, but which, perhaps, even the more for the blots and strokes, gives a distinct notion, an emphatic image, to all who see it. We say at once, *now* we know the sort of thing. The sketch has *hit* the mind. True literature does the same. It describes sorts, varieties, and permutations, by delineating the type of each sort, the idea of each

variety, the central, the marking trait of each permutation

On this account, the greatest artists of the world have ever shown an enthusiasm for reality. To care for notions and abstractions; to philosophize; to reason out conclusions, to care for schemes of thought, are signs in the artistic mind of secondary value. A Schiller, a Euripides, a Ben Jonson, cares for *types*—for the parings of the intellect, and the distillation of the mind; a Shakespeare, a Homer, a Goethe finds mental occupation, the true home of his natural thoughts, in the real world—“which is the world of all of us”—where the face of Nature, the moving masses of men and women, are ever changing, ever multiplying, ever mixing one with the other. The reason is plain—the business of the poet, of the artist, is with *types*; and those types are mirrored in reality. As a painter must not only have a hand to execute, but an eye to distinguish—as he must go here and there through the real world to catch the picturesque man, the picturesque scene, which is to live on his canvas—so the poet must find in that reality, the *literatesque* man, the *literatesque* scene, which nature intends for him, and which will live in his page. Even in reality he will not find this type complete, or the characteristics perfect; but there he will find, at least, something, some hint, some intimation, some suggestion; whereas, in the stagnant home of his own thoughts he will find nothing pure, nothing as it is, nothing which does not bear his own mark, which is not somehow altered by a mixture with himself.

The first conversation of Goethe and Schiller illustrates this conception of the poet’s art. Goethe was at that time prejudiced against Schiller, we must remember, partly from what he considered the outrages of the “Robbers,” partly because of the philosophy of Kant. Schiller’s “Essay on Grace and Dignity,” he tells us—

\* Wordsworth: “Prelude,” book xi

" Was yet less of a kind to reconcile me The philosophy of Kant, which exalts the dignity of mind so highly, while appearing to restrict it, Schiller had joyfully embraced. it unfolded the extraordinary qualities which Nature had implanted in him ; and in the lively feeling of freedom and self-direction, he showed himself unthankful to the Great Mother, who surely had not acted like a step-dame towards him. Instead of viewing her as self-subsisting, as producing with a living force, and according to appointed laws, alike the highest and the lowest of her works, he took her up under the aspect of some empirical native qualities of the human mind Certain harsh passages I could even directly apply to myself they exhibited my confession of faith in a false light ; and I felt that if written without particular attention to me, they were still worse , for, in that case, the vast chasm which lay between us gaped but so much the more distinctly."

After a casual meeting at a Society for Natural History, they walked home, and Goethe proceeds

" We reached his house ; the talk induced me to go in I then expounded to him, with as much vivacity as possible, the *Metamorphosis of plants*,\* drawing out on paper, with many characteristic strokes, a symbolic plant for him, as I proceeded. He heard and saw all this, with much interest and distinct comprehension ; but when I had done, he shook his head and said ' This is no experiment, this is an idea ' I stopped with some degree of irritation ; for the point which separated us was most luminously marked by this expression The opinions in ' Dignity and Grace ' again occurred to me , the old grudge was just awakening ; but I smothered it, and merely said ' I was happy to find that I had got ideas without knowing it, nay, that I saw them before my eyes '

" Schiller had much more prudence and dexterity of management than I , he was also thinking of his periodical, the *Horen*, about this time, and of course rather wished to

\* "A curious physiologico-botanical theory by Goethe, which appears to be entirely unknown in this country. though several eminent continental botanists have noticed it with commendation It is explained at considerable length in this same *Morphologie*"— Note by Carlyle

attract than repel me. Accordingly, he answered me like an accomplished Kantite; and as my stiff necked Realism gave occasion to many contradictions, much battling took place between us, and at last a truce, in which neither party would consent to yield the victory, but each held himself invincible. Positions like the following grieved me to the very soul *How can there ever be an experiment, that shall correspond with an idea?* The specific quality of an idea is, that no experiment can reach it or agree with it Yet if he held as an idea, the same thing which I looked upon as an experiment, there must certainly, I thought, be some community between us—some ground whereon both of us might meet! ” \*

With Goethe's natural history, or with Kant's philosophy, we have here no concern: but we can combine the expressions of the two great poets into a nearly complete description of poetry. The “symbolic plant” is the *type* of which we speak, the ideal at which inferior specimens aim, the class characteristic in which they all share, but which none shows forth fully Goethe was right in searching for this in reality and nature; Schiller was right in saying that it was an “idea,” a transcending notion to which approximations could be found in experience, but only approximations—which could not be found there itself. Goethe, as a poet, rightly felt the primary necessity of outward suggestion and experience; Schiller, as a philosopher, rightly felt its imperfection.

But in these delicate matters, it is easy to misapprehend. There is, undoubtedly, a sort of poetry which is produced as it were out of the author's mind. The description of the poet's own moods and feelings is a common sort of poetry—perhaps the commonest sort. But the peculiarity of such cases is, that the poet does not describe himself *as himself*. autobiography is not his object, he takes himself as a specimen of human nature, he describes, not himself, but a distillation of himself he takes such of his moods as are most char-

\* Appendix to Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, note C.

acteristic, as most typify certain moods of certain men, or certain moods of all men ; he chooses preponderant feelings of special sorts of men, or occasional feelings of men of all sorts , but with whatever other difference and diversity, the essence is that such self-describing poets describe what is *in* them, but not *peculiar* to them,—what is generic, not what is special and individual Gray's "Elegy" describes a mood which Gray felt more than other men, but which most others, perhaps all others, feel too. It is more popular, perhaps, than any English poem, because that sort of feeling is the most diffused of high feelings, and because Gray added to a singular nicety of fancy a habitual proneness to a *contemplative*—a discerning but unbiased—meditation on death and on life Other poets cannot hope for such success : a subject so popular, so grave, so wise, and yet so suitable to the writer's nature, is hardly to be found But the same ideal, the same unautobiographical character, is to be found in the writings of meander men. Take sonnets of Hartley Coleridge, for example :

## I

## TO A FRIEND

" When we were idlers with the loitering rills,  
 The need of human love we little noted .  
 Our love was Nature , and the peace that floated  
 On the white mist, and dwelt upon the hills,  
 To sweet accord subdued our wayward wills  
 One soul was ours, one mind, one heart devoted,  
 That, wisely doating, ask'd not why it doated,  
 And ours the unknown joy, which knowing kills  
 But now I find, how dear thou wert to me ,  
 That man is more than half of Nature's treasure,  
 Of that fair Beauty which no eye can see,  
 Of that sweet music which no ear can measure ,  
 And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure,  
 The hills sleep on in their eternity."

## II

## TO THE SAME

“ In the great city we are met again,  
 Where many souls there are that breathe and die,  
 Scarce knowing more of Nature's potency,  
 Than what they learn from heat, or cold, or rain,  
 The sad vicissitude of weary pain,—  
 For busy man is lord of ear and eye,  
 And what hath Nature, but the vast void sky,  
 And the thronged river toiling to the main ?  
 Oh ! say not so, for she shall have her part  
 In every smile, in every tear that falls,  
 And she shall hide her in the secret heart,  
 Where love persuades, and steiner duty calls :  
 But worse it were than death, or sorrow's smart,  
 To live without a friend within these walls.”

## III

## TO THE SAME

“ We parted on the mountains, as two streams  
 From one clear spring pursue their several ways ,  
 And thy fleet course hath been through many a maze  
 In foreign lands, where silvery Padus gleams  
 To that delicious sky, whose glowing beams  
 Brightened the tresses that old Poets praise ;  
 Where Petrarch's patient love and artful lays,  
 And Ariosto's song of many themes,  
 Moved the soft air But I, a lazy brook,  
 As close pent up within my native dell,  
 Have crept along from nook to shady nook,  
 Where flow'rets blow, and whispering Naiads dwell  
 Yet now we meet, that parted were so wide,  
 O'er rough and smooth to travel side by side ”

The contrast of instructive and enviable locomotion with refining but instructive meditation is not special

and peculiar to these two, but general and universal. It was set down by Hartley Coleridge because he was the most meditative and refining of men

What sort of literatesque types are fit to be described in the sort of literature called poetry, is a matter on which much might be written. Mr. Arnold, some years since, put forth a theory that the art of poetry could only delineate *great actions*. But though, rightly interpreted and understood—using the word action so as to include high and sound activity in contemplation—this definition may suit the highest poetry, it certainly cannot be stretched to include many inferior sorts and even many good sorts. Nobody in their senses would describe Gray's "Elegy" as the delineation of a "great action"; some kinds of mental contemplation may be energetic enough to deserve this name, but Gray would have been frightened at the very word. He loved scholar-like calm and quiet inaction, his very greatness depended on his *not* acting, on his "wise passiveness," on his indulging the grave idleness which so well appreciates so much of human life. But the best answer—the *reductio ad absurdum*—of Mr. Arnold's doctrine, is the mutilation which it has caused him to make of his own writings. It has forbidden him, he tells us, to reprint "Empedocles"—a poem undoubtedly containing defects and even excesses, but containing also these lines :

" And yet what days were those, Parmenides !  
 When we were young, when we could number friends  
 In all the Italian cities like ourselves,  
 When with elated hearts we join'd your train,  
 Ye Sun-born virgins ! on the road of Truth  
 Then we could still enjoy then neither thought  
 Nor outward things were clos'd and dead to us,  
 But we receiv'd the shock of mighty thoughts  
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy ,  
 And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,  
 We had the power to feel the pressure eas'd,  
 The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,

In the delightful commerce of the world  
 We had not lost our balance then, nor grown  
 Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy  
 The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—  
 The sports of the country people,  
 A flute note from the woods,  
 Sunset over the sea.  
 Seed-time and harvest;  
 The reapers in the corn;  
 The vinedresser in the vineyard;  
 The village-girl at her wheel  
 Fullness of life and power of feeling, ye  
 Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,  
 Who dwell on a firm basis of content  
 But he who has outliv'd his prosperous days,  
 But he, whose youth fell on a different world  
 From that on which his exil'd age is thrown,  
 Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd  
 By other rules that are in vogue to-day;  
 Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,  
 But in a world he loves not must subsist  
 In ceaseless opposition, be the guard  
 Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,  
 That the world win no mastery over him;  
 Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one;  
 Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd  
 To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy,—  
 Joy and the outward world must die to him  
 As they are dead to me”

What freak of criticism can induce a man who has written such poetry as this, to discard it, and say it is not poetry? Mr Arnold is privileged to speak of his own poems, but no other critic could speak so and not be laughed at.

We are disposed to believe that no very sharp definition can be given—at least in the present state of the critical art—of the boundary line between poetry and other sorts of imaginative delineation. Between the undoubted dominions of the two kinds there is a debatable land; everybody is agreed that the “Œdipus at Colonus” is poetry: every one is agreed that the

wonderful appearance of Mrs Veal \* is *not* poetry. But the exact line which separates grave novels in verse, like "Aylmer's Field" or "Enoch Arden," from grave rovels not in verse, like *Silas Marner* or *Adam Bede*, we own we cannot draw with any confidence. Nor, perhaps, is it very important; whether a narrative is thrown into verse or not certainly depends in part on the taste of the age, and in part on its mechanical helps. Verse is the only mechanical help to the memory in rude times, and there is little writing till a cheap something is found to write upon, and a cheap something to write with. Poetry—verse, at least—is the literature of *all work* in early ages, it is only later ages which write in what *they* think a natural and simple prose. There are other casual influences in the matter too; but they are not material now. We need only say here that poetry, because it has a more marked rhythm than prose, must be more intense in meaning and more concise in style than prose. People expect a "marked rhythm" to imply something worth marking; if it fails to do so they are disappointed. They are displeased at the visible waste of a powerful instrument, they call it "doggerel," and rightly call it, for the metrical expression of full thought and eager feeling—the burst of metre—incident to high imagination, should not be wasted on petty matters which prose does as well—which it does better—which it suits by its very limpness and weakness, whose small changes it follows more easily, and to whose lowest details it can fully and without effort degrade itself. Verse, too, should be *more concise*, for long-continued rhythm tends to jade the mind, just as brief rhythm tends to attract the attention. Poetry should be memorable and emphatic, intense, and *soon over*.

The great divisions of poetry, and of all other literary art, arise from the different modes in which these *types*—these characteristic men, these characteristic feelings—

may be variously described. There are three principal modes which we shall attempt to describe—the *pure* which is sometimes, but not very wisely, called the classical ; the *ornate*, which is also unwisely called romantic ; and the *grotesque*, which might be called the mediæval. We will describe the nature of these a little. Criticism, we know, must be brief—not, like poetry, because its charm is too intense to be sustained—but, on the contrary, because its interest is too weak to be prolonged , but elementary criticism, if an evil, is a necessary evil , a little while spent among the simple principles of art is the first condition, the absolute prerequisite, for surely apprehending and wisely judging the complete embodiments and miscellaneous forms of actual literature.

The definition of *pure* literature is, that it describes the type in its simplicity—we mean, with the exact amount of accessory circumstance which is necessary to bring it before the mind in finished perfection, and no more than that amount. The *type* needs some accessories from its nature—a picturesque landscape does not consist wholly of picturesque features. There is a setting of surroundings—as the Americans would say, of fixings—without which the reality is not itself. By a traditional mode of speech, as soon as we see a picture in which a complete effect is produced by detail so rare and so harmonized as to escape us, we say, How “classical” ! The whole which is to be seen appears at once and through the detail, but the detail itself is not seen : we do not think of that which gives us the idea ; we are absorbed in the idea itself. Just so in literature, the pure art is that which works with the fewest strokes ; the fewest, that is, for its purpose, for its aim is to call up and bring home to men an idea, a form, a character, and if that idea be twisted, that form be involved, that character perplexed, many strokes of literary art will be needful. Pure art does not mutilate its object ; it represents it as fully as is possible with the slightest effort which is possible : it

shrinks from no needful circumstances, as little as it inserts any which are needless. The precise peculiarity is not merely that no incidental circumstance is inserted which does not tell on the main design—no art is fit to be called *art* which permits a stroke to be put in without an object—but that only the minimum of such circumstance is inserted at all. The form is sometimes said to be bare, the accessories are sometimes said to be invisible, because the appendages are so choice that the shape only is perceived.

The English literature undoubtedly contains much impure literature—impure in its style, if not in its meaning—but it also contains one great, one nearly perfect, model of the pure style in the literary expression of typical *sentiment*, and one not perfect, but gigantic and close approximation to perfection in the pure delineation of objective character. Wordsworth, perhaps, comes as near to choice purity of style in sentiment as is possible; Milton, with exceptions and conditions to be explained, approaches perfection by the strenuous purity with which he depicts character.

A wit once said that “*pretty* women had more features than *beautiful* women,” and though the expression may be criticized, the meaning is correct. Pretty women seem to have a great number of attractive points, each of which attracts your attention, and each one of which you remember afterwards, yet these points have not grown together, their features have not linked themselves into a single inseparable whole. But a beautiful woman is a whole as she is; you no more take her to pieces than a Greek statue; she is not an aggregate of divisible charms, she is a charm in herself. Such ever is the dividing test of pure art, if you catch yourself admiring its details, it is defective, you ought to think of it as a single whole which you must remember, which you must admire, which somehow subdues you while you admire it, which is a “possession” to you “for ever”

Of course, no individual poem embodies this ideal perfectly, of course, every human word and phrase has its imperfections, and if we choose an instance to illustrate that ideal, the instance has scarcely a fair chance. By contrasting it with the ideal, we suggest its imperfections, by protruding it as an example, we turn on its defectiveness the microscope of criticism. Yet these two sonnets of Wordsworth may be fitly read in this place, not because they are quite without faults, or because they are the very best examples of their kind of style, but because they are luminous examples; the compactness of the sonnet and the gravity of the sentiment, hedging in the thoughts, restraining the fancy, and helping to maintain a singleness of expression.

## THE TROSSACHS

“ There’s not a nook within this solemn pass,  
 But were an apt confessional for one  
 Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,  
 That life is but a tale of morning grass  
 Withered at eve From scenes of art which chase  
 That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes  
 Feed it ‘mid Nature’s old felicities,  
 Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass  
 Untouched, unbreathed upon Thrice happy guest,  
 If from a golden perch of aspen spray  
 (October’s workmanship to rival May)  
 The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast  
 That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay  
 Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest ! ”

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1802

“ Earth has not anything to show more fair :  
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
 A sight so touching in its majesty  
 This city now doth, like a garment, wear  
 The beauty of the morning, silent, bare,

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields and to the sky,  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
 Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill,  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will  
 Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

Instances of bolder style than this may easily be found, instances of colder style—few better instances of purer style. Not a single expression (the invocation in the concluding couplet of the second sonnet perhaps excepted) can be spared, yet not a single expression rivets the attention. If, indeed, we take out the phrase—

"The city now doth, like a garment, wear  
 The beauty of the morning,"

and the description of the brilliant yellow of autumn—

"October's workmanship to rival May,"

they have independent value, but they are not noticed in the sonnet when we read it through, they fall into place there, and being in their place, are not seen. The great subjects of the two sonnets, the religious aspect of beautiful but grave Nature—the religious aspect of a city about to awaken and be alive, are the only ideas left in our mind. To Wordsworth has been vouchsafed the last grace of the self-denying artist, you think neither of him nor his style, but you cannot help thinking of—you *must* recall—the exact phrase, the *very* sentiment he wished

Milton's purity is more eager. In the most exciting parts of Wordsworth—and these sonnets are not very exciting—you always feel, you never forget, that what you have before you is the excitement of a

recluse There is nothing of the stir of life ; nothing of the brawl of the world But Milton, though always a scholar by trade, though solitary in old age, was through life intent on great affairs, lived close to great scenes, watched a revolution, and if not an actor in it, was at least secretary to the actors He was familiar—by daily experience and habitual sympathy—with the earnest debate of arduous questions, on which the life and death of the speakers certainly depended, on which the weal or woe of the country perhaps depended. He knew how profoundly the individual character of the speakers—their inner and real nature—modifies their opinion on such questions ; he knew how surely that nature will appear in the expression of them This great experience, fashioned by a fine imagination, gives to the debate of the Satanic Council in Pandæmonium its reality and its life It is a debate in the Long Parliament, and though the theme of “Paradise Lost” obliged Milton to side with the monarchical element in the universe, his old habits are often too much for him, and his real sympathy—the impetus and energy of his nature—side with the rebellious element. For the purposes of art this is much better. Of a court, a poet can make but little, of a heaven, he can make very little ; but of a courtly heaven, such as Milton conceived, he can make nothing at all. The idea of a court and the idea of a heaven are so radically different, that a distinct combination of them is always grotesque and often ludicrous. “Paradise Lost,” as a whole, is radically tainted by a vicious principle. It professes to justify the ways of God to man, to account for sin and death, and it tells you that the whole originated in a political event ; in a court squabble as to a particular act of patronage and the due or undue promotion of an eldest son Satan may have been wrong, but on Milton’s theory he had an arguable case at least There was something arbitrary in the promotion ; there were little symptoms of a job ; in “Paradise Lost” it is always clear that the devils

are the weaker, but it is never clear that the angels are the better. Milton's sympathy and his imagination slip back to the Puritan rebels whom he loved, and desert the courtly angels whom he could not love, although he praised them. There is no wonder that Milton's hell is better than his heaven, for he hated officials and he loved rebels,—he employs his genius below, and accumulates his pedantry above. On the great debate in Pandæmonium all his genius is concentrated. The question is very practical, it is, "What are we devils to do, now we have lost heaven?" Satan, who presides over and manipulates the assembly, Moloch,

"The fiercest spirit  
That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair,"

who wants to fight again; Belial, "the man of the world," who does not want to fight any more; Mammon, who is for commencing an industrial career; Beelzebub, the official statesman,

"Deep on his front engraven,  
Deliberation sat and Public care,"

who, at Satan's instance, proposes the invasion of earth,—are as distinct as so many statues. Even Belial, "the man of the world," the sort of man with whom Milton had least sympathy, is perfectly painted. An inferior artist would have made the actor who "counselled ignoble ease and peaceful sloth," a degraded and ugly creature, but Milton knew better. He knew that low notions require a better garb than high notions. Human nature is not a high thing, but at least it has a high idea of itself; it will not accept mean maxims, unless they are gilded and made beautiful. A prophet in goatskin may cry, "Repent, repent," but it takes "purple and fine linen" to be able to say, "Continue in your sins." The world vanquishes with its specious-

ness and its show, and the orator who is to persuade men to worldliness must have a share in them. Milton well knew this; after the warlike speech of the fierce Moloch, he introduces a brighter and a more graceful spirit

“ He ended frowning, and his look denounced  
 Desp’rate revenge, and battle dangerous  
 To less than Gods. On th’ other side up rose  
 Belial, in act more graceful and humane  
 A fairer person lost not Heaven, he seem’d  
 For dignity composed and high exploit.  
 But all was false and hollow, though his tongue  
 Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear  
 The better reason, to perplex and dash  
 Maturest counsels, for his thoughts were low,  
 To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds  
 Tim’rous and slothful yet he pleased the ear,  
 And with persuasive accent thus began . ”

He does not begin like a man with a strong case, but like a man with a weak case, he knows that the pride of human nature is irritated by mean advice, and though he may probably persuade men to take it, he must carefully apologize for giving it. Here, as elsewhere, though the formal address is to devils, the real address is to men to the human nature which we know, not to the fictitious diabolic nature we do not know.

“ I should be much for open war, O Peers!  
 As not behind in hate, if what was urged  
 Main reason to persuade immediate war,  
 Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast  
 Ominous conjecture on the whole success:  
 When he who most excels in fact of arms,  
 In what he counsels and in what excels  
 Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair,  
 And utter dissolution, as the scope  
 Of all his aim, after some dire revenge  
 First, what revenge? The tow’rs of Heav’n are fill’d  
 With armed watch, that render all access  
 Impregnable, oft on the boid’ring deep

Encamp their legions, or with obscure wing  
 Scout far and wide into the realm of night,  
 Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way  
 By force, and at our hecks all Hell should rise  
 With blackest insurrection, to confound  
 Heav'n's purest light, yet our Great Enemy,  
 All incorruptible, would on His throne  
 Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould,  
 Incapable of stain, would soon expel  
 Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire  
 Victorious Thus repulsed, our final hope  
 Is flat despair. We must exasperate  
 Th' Almighty Victor to spend all His rage,  
 And that must end us that must be our cure,  
 To be no more? Sad cure; for who would lose,  
 Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
 Those thoughts that wander through eternity,  
 To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost  
 In the wide womb of uncreated night,  
 Devoid of sense and motion? And who knows,  
 Let this be good, whether our angry Foe  
 Can give it, or will ever? How He can,  
 Is doubtful, that He never will, is sure  
 Will He, so wise, let loose at once His ire  
 Belike through impotence, or unaware,  
 To give His enemies their wish, and end  
 Them in His anger, whom His anger saves  
 To punish endless? Wherefore cease we then?  
 Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,  
 Reserved, and destined, to eternal woe;  
 Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,  
 What can we suffer worse? Is this then worst,  
 Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?"

• • •

And so on.

Mr. Pitt knew this speech by heart, and Lord Macaulay has called it incomparable, and these judges of the oratorical art have well decided A mean foreign policy cannot be better defended Its sensibleness is effectually explained, and its tameness as much as possible disguised.

But we have not here to do with the excellence of Belial's policy, but with the excellence of his speech ; and with that speech in a peculiar manner. This speech, taken with the few lines of description with which Milton introduces them, embody, in as short a space as possible, with as much perfection as possible, the delineation of the type of character common at all times, dangerous in many times ; sure to come to the surface in moments of difficulty, and never more dangerous than then. As Milton describes it, it is one among several *typical* characters which will ever have their place in great councils, which will ever be heard at important decisions, which are part of the characteristic and inalienable whole of this statesman-like world. The debate in Pandæmonium is a debate among these typical characters at the greatest conceivable crisis, and with adjuncts of solemnity which no other situation could rival. It is the greatest classical triumph, the highest achievement of the pure style in English literature ; it is the greatest description of the highest and most typical characters with the most choice circumstances and in the fewest words.

It is not unremarkable that we should find in Milton and in "Paradise Lost" the best specimen of pure style. Milton was a schoolmaster in a pedantic age, and there is nothing so unclassical—nothing so impure in style—as pedantry. The out-of-door conversational life of Athens was as opposed to bookish scholasticism as a life can be. The most perfect books have been written not by those who thought much of books, but by those who thought little, by those who were under the restraint of a sensitive talking world, to which books had contributed something, and a various, eager life the rest. Milton is generally unclassical in spirit where he is learned, and naturally, because the purest poets do not overlay their conceptions with book-knowledge, and the classical poets, having in comparison no books, were under little temptation to impair the purity of their

style by the accumulation of their research. Over and above this, there is in Milton, and a little in Wordsworth also, one defect which is in the highest degree faulty and unclassical, which mars the effect and impairs the perfection of the pure style. There is a want of spontaneity, and a sense of effort. It has been happily said that Plato's words must have *grown* into their places. No one would say so of Milton or even of Wordsworth. About both of them there is a taint of duty ; a vicious sense of the good man's task. Things seem right where they are, but they seem to be put where they are. Flexibility is essential to the consummate perfection of the pure style, because the sensation of the poet's efforts carries away our thoughts from his achievements. We are admiring his labours when we should be enjoying his words. But this is a defect in those two writers, not a defect in pure art. Of course it is more difficult to write in few words than to write in many, to take the best adjuncts, and those only, for what you have to say, instead of using all which comes to hand. It is an additional labour if you write verses in a morning, to spend the rest of the day in *choosing*, that is, in making those verses fewer. But a perfect artist in the pure style is as effortless and as natural as in any style, perhaps is more so. Take the well-known lines :

“ There was a little lawny islet  
 By anemone and violet,  
 Like mosaic, paven .  
 And its roof was flowers and leaves  
 Which the summer's breath enweaves,  
 Where nor sun, nor showers, nor breeze,  
 Pierce the pines and tallest trees,  
 Each a gem engraven .  
 Girt by many an azure wave  
 With which the clouds and mountains pave  
 A lake's blue chasm ” \*

Shelley had many merits and many defects. This is not the place for a complete, or indeed for any, estimate of him. But one excellence is most evident. His words are as flexible as any words; the rhythm of some modulating air seems to move them into their place without a struggle by the poet, and almost without his knowledge. This is the perfection of pure art, to embody typical conceptions in the choicest, the fewest accidents, to embody them so that each of these accidents may produce its full effect, and so to embody them without effort.

The extreme opposite to this pure art is what may be called ornate art. This species of art aims also at giving a delineation of the typical idea in its perfection and its fullness, but it aims at so doing in a manner most different. It wishes to surround the type with the greatest number of circumstances which it will bear. It works not by choice and selection, but by accumulation and aggregation. The idea is not, as in the pure style, presented with the least clothing which it will endure, but with the richest and most involved clothing that it will admit.

We are fortunate in not having to hunt out of past literature an illustrative specimen of the ornate style. Mr. Tennyson has just given one admirable in itself, and most characteristic of the defects and the merits of this style. The story of "Enoch Arden," as he has enhanced and presented it, is a rich and splendid composite of imagery and illustration. Yet how simple that story is in itself! A sailor who sells fish, breaks his leg, gets dismal, gives up selling fish, goes to sea, is wrecked on a desert island, stays there some years, on his return finds his wife married to a miller, speaks to a landlady on the subject, and dies. Told in the pure and simple, the unadorned and classical style, this story would not have taken three pages, but Mr. Tennyson has been able to make it the principal—the largest tale in his new volume. He has done so only

by giving to every event and incident in the volume an accompanying commentary. He tells a great deal about the torrid zone, which a rough sailor like Enoch Arden certainly would not have perceived; and he gives to the fishing village, to which all the characters belong, a softness and a fascination which such villages scarcely possess in reality.

The description of the tropical island on which the sailor is thrown is an absolute model of adorned art:

“ The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns  
 And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,  
 The slender coco’s drooping crown of plumes,  
 The lightning flash of insect and of bird,  
 The lustre of the long convolvuluses  
 That coil’d around the stately stems, and ran  
 Ev’n to the limit of the land, the glows  
 And glories of the broad belt of the world,  
 All these he saw, but what he fain had seen  
 He could not see, the kindly human face,  
 Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard  
 The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,  
 The league-long roller thundering on the reef,  
 The moving whisper of huge trees that branch’d  
 And blossom’d in the zenith, or the sweep  
 Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,  
 As down the shore he ranged, or all day long  
 Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,  
 A shipwreck’d sailor, waiting for a sail  
 No sail from day to day, but every day  
 The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts  
 Among the palms and ferns and precipices;  
 The blaze upon the waters to the east,  
 The blaze upon his island overhead,  
 The blaze upon the waters to the west;  
 Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,  
 The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again  
 The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail ”

No expressive circumstance can be added to this description, no enhancing detail suggested. A much

less happy instance is the description of Enoch's life before he sailed

“ While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,  
 Or often journeying landward, for in truth  
 Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean spoil  
 In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,  
 Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter gales,  
 Not only to the market-cross were known,  
 But in the leafy lanes behind the down,  
 Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,  
 And peacock yew-tree of the lonely Hall,  
 Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering ”

So much has not often been made of selling fish. The essence of ornate art is in this manner to accumulate round the typical object everything which can be said about it, every associated thought that can be connected with it, without impairing the essence of the delineation.

The first defect which strikes a student of ornate art—the first which arrests the mere reader of it—is what is called a want of simplicity. Nothing is described as it is; everything has about it an atmosphere of something else. The combined and associated thoughts, though they set off and heighten particular ideas and aspects of the central and typical conception, yet complicate it: a simple thing—“a daisy by the river's brim”—is never left by itself, something else is put with it; something not more connected with it than “lion-whelp” and the “peacock yew-tree” are with the “fresh fish for sale” that Enoch carries past them. Even in the highest cases, ornate art leaves upon a cultured and delicate taste the conviction that it is not the highest art, that it is somehow excessive and over-rich, that it is not chaste in itself or chastening to the mind that sees it—that it is in an explained manner unsatisfactory, “a thing in which we feel there is some hidden want !”

That want is a want of “definition”. We must all

know landscapes, river landscapes especially, which are in the highest sense beautiful, which when we first see them give us a delicate pleasure ; which in some—and these the best cases—give even a gentle sense of surprise that such things should be so beautiful, and yet when we come to live in them, to spend even a few hours in them, we seem stifled and oppressed On the other hand, there are people to whom the seashore is a companion, an exhilaration , and not so much for the brawl of the shore as for the limited vastness, the finite infinite of the ocean as they see it Such people often come home braced and nerved, and if they spoke out the truth, would have only to say, “ We have seen the horizon line ; ” if they were let alone indeed, they would gaze on it hour after hour, so great to them is the fascination, so full the sustaining calm, which they gain from that union of form and greatness To a very inferior extent, but still, perhaps, to an extent which most people understand better, a common arch will have the same effect. A bridge completes a river landscape ; if of the old and many-arched sort, it regulates by a long series of defined forms the vague outline of wood and river, which before had nothing to measure it ; if of the new scientific sort, it introduces still more strictly a geometrical element ; it stiffens the scenery which was before too soft, too delicate, too vegetable Just such is the effect of pure style in literary art It calms by conciseness ; while the ornate style leaves on the mind a mist of beauty, an excess of fascination, a complication of charm, the pure style leaves behind it the simple, defined, measured idea, as it is, and by itself That which is chaste chastens ; there is a poised energy—a state half thrill, half tranquillity—which pure art gives, which no other can give , a pleasure justified as well as felt ; an ennobled satisfaction at what ought to satisfy us, and must enoble us

Ornate art is to pure art what a painted statue is to an unpainted. It is impossible to deny that a touch of

colour does bring out certain parts ; does convey certain expressions ; does heighten certain features. but it leaves on the work as a whole, a want, as we say, " of something ", a want of that inseparable chasteness which clings to simple sculpture, an impairing predominance of alluring details which impairs our satisfaction with our own satisfaction ; which makes us doubt whether a higher being than ourselves will be satisfied even though we are so. In the very same manner, though the rouge of ornate literature excites our eye, it also impairs our confidence

Mr. Arnold has justly observed that this self-justifying, self-proving purity of style is commoner in ancient literature than in modern literature, and also that Shakespeare is not a great or an unmixed example of it. No one can say that he is. His works are full of under-growth, are full of complexity, are not models of style, except by a miracle, nothing in the Elizabethan age could be a model of style ; the restraining taste of that age was feebler and more mistaken than that of any other equally great age. Shakespeare's mind so teemed with creation that he required the most just, most forcible, most constant restraint from without. He most needed to be guided among poets, and he was the least and worst guided. As a whole, no one can call his works finished models of the pure style, or of any style. But he has many passages of the most pure style, passages which could be easily cited if space served. And we must remember that the task which Shakespeare undertook was the most difficult which any poet has ever attempted, and that it is a task in which after a million efforts every other poet has failed. The Elizabethan drama—as Shakespeare has immortalized it—undertakes to delineate in five acts, under stage restrictions, and in mere dialogue, a whole list of *dramatis personæ*, a set of characters enough for a modern novel, and with the distinctness of a modern novel. Shakespeare is not content to give two or three

great characters in solitude and in dignity, like the classical dramatists ; he wishes to give a whole party of characters in the play of life, and according to the nature of each. He would " hold the mirror up to nature," not to catch a monarch in a tragic posture, but a whole group of characters engaged in many actions, intent on many purposes, thinking many thoughts. There is life enough, there is action enough, in single plays of Shakespeare to set up an ancient dramatist for a long career. And Shakespeare succeeded. His characters, taken *en masse*, and as a whole, are as well known as any novelist's characters, cultivated men know all about them, as young ladies know all about Mr Trollope's novels. But no other dramatist has succeeded in such an aim. No one else's characters are staple people in English literature, hereditary people whom every one knows all about in every generation. The contemporary dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, etc., had many merits, some of them were great men. But a critic must say of them the worst thing he has to say : " They were men who failed in their characteristic aim," they attempted to describe numerous sets of complicated characters, and they failed. No one of such characters, or hardly one, lives in common memory ; the " Faustus " of Marlowe, a really great idea, is not remembered. They undertook to write what they could not write—five acts full of real characters, and in consequence, the fine individual things they conceived are forgotten by the mixed multitude, and known only to a few of the few. Of the Spanish theatre we cannot speak, but there are no such characters in any French tragedy. The whole aim of that tragedy forbade it. Goethe has added to literature a few great characters, he may be said almost to have added to literature the idea of " intellectual creation,"—the idea of describing the great characters through the intellect, but he has not added to the common stock what Shakespeare added, a new

multitude of men and women ; and these not in simple attitudes, but amid the most complex parts of life, with all their various natures roused, mixed, and strained. The severest art must have allowed many details, much overflowing circumstance, to a poet who undertook to describe what almost defies description. Pure art would have commanded him to use details lavishly, for only by a multiplicity of such could the required effect have been at all produced. Shakespeare could accomplish it, for his mind was a spring, an inexhaustible fountain, of human nature, and it is no wonder that being compelled by the task of his time to let the fullness of his nature overflow, he sometimes let it overflow too much, and covered with erroneous conceits and superfluous images characters and conceptions which would have been far more justly, far more effectually, delineated with conciseness and simplicity. But there is an infinity of pure art in Shakespeare, although there is a great deal else also.

It will be said, if ornate art be, as you say, an inferior species of art, why should it ever be used ? If pure art be the best sort of art, why should it not always be used ?

The reason is this : literary art, as we just now explained, is concerned with literatesque characters in literatesque situations ; and the *best* art is concerned with the *most* literatesque characters in the *most* literatesque situations. Such are the subjects of pure art ; it embodies with the fewest touches, and under the most select and choice circumstances, the highest conceptions ; but it does not follow that only the best subjects are to be treated by art, and then only in the very best way. Human nature could not endure such a critical commandment as that, and it would be an erroneous criticism which gave it. *Any* literatesque character may be described in literature under *any* circumstances which exhibit its literatesqueness.

The essence of pure art consists in its describing what *is* as it *is*, and this is very well for what can bear it,

but there are many inferior things which will not bear it, and which nevertheless ought to be described in books. A certain kind of literature deals with illusions, and this kind of literature has given a colouring to the name romantic. A man of rare genius, and even of poetical genius, has gone so far as to make these illusions the true subject of poetry—almost the sole subject.

“Without,” says Father Newman, of one of his characters,\* “being himself a poet, he was in the season of poetry, in the sweet spring-time, when the year is most beautiful because it is new. Novelty was beauty to a heart so open and cheerful as his, not only because it was novelty, and had its proper charm as such, but because when we first see things, we see them in a gay confusion, which is a principal element of the poetical. As time goes on, and we number and sort and measure things,—as we gain views, we advance towards philosophy and truth, but we recede from poetry.”

“When we ourselves were young, we once on a time walked on a hot summer day from Oxford to Newington—a dull road, as any one who has gone it knows; yet it was new to us; and we protest to you, reader, believe it or not, laugh or not, as you will, to us it seemed on that occasion quite touchingly beautiful, and a soft melancholy came over us, of which the shadows fall even now, when we look back upon that dusty, weary journey. And why? because every object which met us was unknown and full of mystery. A tree or two in the distance seemed the beginning of a great wood, or park, stretching endlessly, a hill implied a vale beyond, with that vale’s history; the bye-lanes, with their green hedges, wound on and vanished, yet were not lost to the imagination. Such was our first journey, but when we had gone it several times, the mind refused to act, the scene ceased to enchant, stern reality alone remained, and we thought it one of the most tiresome, odious roads we ever had occasion to traverse.”

That is to say, that the function of the poet is to introduce a “gay confusion,” a rich medley which does not exist in the actual world—which perhaps could not

\* Charles Reding in *Loss and Gain*, vol 1, chap III

exist in any world—but which would seem pretty if it did exist. Every one who reads “Enoch Arden” will perceive that this notion of all poetry is exactly applicable to this one poem. Whatever be made of Enoch’s “Ocean spoil in ocean-smelling osier,” of the “portal-warding lion-whelp, and the peacock yew-tree,” every one knows that in himself Enoch could not have been charming. People who sell fish about the country (and that is what he did, though Mr. Tennyson won’t speak out, and wraps it up) never are beautiful. As Enoch was and must be coarse, in itself the poem must depend for a charm on a “gay confusion”—on a splendid accumulation of impossible accessories.

Mr Tennyson knows this better than many of us—he knows the country world; he has proved that no one living knows it better; he has painted with pure art—with art which describes what is a race perhaps more refined, more delicate, more conscientious, than the sailor—the “Northern Farmer,” and we all know what a splendid, what a living thing, he has made of it. He could, if he only would, have given us the ideal sailor in like manner—the ideal of the natural sailor we mean—the characteristic present man as he lives and is. But this he has not chosen. He has endeavoured to describe an exceptional sailor, at an exceptionally refined port, performing a graceful act, an act of relinquishment. And with this task before him, his profound taste taught him that ornate art was a necessary medium—was the sole effectual instrument—for his purpose. It was necessary for him if possible to abstract the mind from reality, to induce us *not* to conceive or think of sailors as they are while we are reading of his sailors, but to think of what a person who did not know might fancy sailors to be. A casual traveller on the seashore, with the sensitive mood and the romantic imagination Dr Newman has described, might fancy, would fancy, a seafaring village to be like that. Accordingly, Mr. Tennyson has made it his aim to call off the stress of

fancy from real life, to occupy it otherwise, to bury it with pretty accessories ; to engage it on the " peacock yew-tree," and the " portal-warding lion-whelp " Nothing, too, can be more splendid than the description of the tropics as Mr Tennyson delineates them, but a sailor would not have felt the tropics in that manner. The beauties of Nature would not have so much occupied him. He would have known little of the scarlet shafts of sunrise and nothing of the long convolvuluses. As in Robinson Crusoe, his own petty contrivances and his small ailments would have been the principal subject to him. " For three years," he might have said, " my back was bad ; and then I put two pegs into a piece of driftwood and so made a chair ; and after that it pleased God to send me a chill " In real life his piety would scarcely have gone beyond that.

It will indeed be said, that though the sailor had no words for, and even no explicit consciousness of, the splendid details of the torrid zone, yet that he had, notwithstanding, a dim latent inexpressible conception of them : though he could not speak of them or describe them, yet they were much to him And doubtless such is the case Rude people are impressed by what is beautiful—deeply impressed—though they could not describe what they see, or what they feel But what is absurd in Mr. Tennyson's description—absurd when we abstract it from the gorgeous additions and ornaments with which Mr Tennyson distracts us—is, that his hero feels nothing else but these great splendours We hear nothing of the physical ailments, the rough devices, the low superstitions, which really would have been the *first* things, the favourite and principal occupations of his mind Just so when he gets home he *may* have had such fine sentiments, though it is odd, and he *may* have spoken of them to his landlady, though that is odder still,—but it is incredible that his whole mind should be made up of fine sentiments. Besides those sweet feelings, if he had them, there must have been many

more obvious, more prosaic, and some perhaps more healthy. Mr. Tennyson has shown a profound judgment in distracting us as he does. He has given us a classic delineation of the "Northern Farmer" with no ornament at all—as bare a thing as can be—because he then wanted to describe a true type of real men: he has given us a sailor crowded all over with ornament and illustration, because he then wanted to describe an unreal type of fancied men,—not sailors as they are, but sailors as they might be wished.

Another prominent element in "Enoch Arden" is yet more suitable to, yet more requires the aid of, ornate art. Mr. Tennyson undertook to deal with *half belief*. The presentiments which Annie feels are exactly of that sort which everybody has felt, and which every one has half believed—which hardly any one has more than half believed. Almost every one, it has been said, would be angry if any one else reported that he believed in ghosts; yet hardly any one, when thinking by himself, wholly disbelieves them. Just so such presentiments as Mr. Tennyson depicts, impress the inner mind so much that the outer mind—the rational understanding—hardly likes to consider them nicely or to discuss them sceptically. For these dubious themes an ornate or complex style is needful. Classical art speaks out what it has to say plainly and simply. Pure style cannot hesitate, it describes in concisest outline what is, as it is. If a poet really believes in presentiments he can speak out in pure style. One who could have been a poet—one of the few in any age of whom one can say certainly that they could have been and have not been—has spoken thus:

" When Heaven sends sorrow  
 Warnings go first,  
 Lest it should burst  
 With stunning might  
 On souls too bright  
 To fear the morrow

Can science bear us  
 To the hid springs  
 Of human things ?  
 Why may not dream,  
 Or thought's day-gleam,  
 Startle, yet cheer ?

Are such thoughts fetters,  
 While faith disowns  
 Dread of earth's tones,  
 Recks but Heaven's call,  
 And on the wall,  
 Reads but Heaven's letters ? " \*

But if a poet is not sure whether presentiments are true or not true ; if he wishes to leave his readers in doubt ; if he wishes an atmosphere of indistinct illusion and of moving shadow, he must use the romantic style, the style of miscellaneous adjunct, the style " which shirks, not meets " your intellect, the style which, as you are scrutinizing, disappears.

Nor is this all, or even the principal lesson, which " Enoch Arden " may suggest to us, of the use of ornate art. That art is the appropriate art for an *unpleasing type*. Many of the characters of real life, if brought distinctly, prominently, and plainly before the mind, as they really are, if shown in their inner nature, their actual essence, are doubtless very unpleasant. They would be horrid to meet and horrid to think of. We fear it must be owned that Enoch Arden is this kind of person. A dirty sailor who did *not* go home to his wife is not an agreeable being : a varnish must be put on him to make him shine. It is true that he acts rightly ; that he is very good. But such is human nature that it finds a little tameness in mere morality. Mere virtue belongs to a charity-school girl, and has a taint of the catechism. All of us feel this, though most of us are too timid, too scrupulous, too anxious about

\* John Henry Newman's " Warnings "

the virtue of others to speak out. We are ashamed of our nature in this respect, but it is not the less our nature. And if we look deeper into the matter there are many reasons why we should not be ashamed of it. The soul of man, and, as we necessarily believe, of beings greater than man, has many parts besides its moral part. It has an intellectual part, an artistic part, even a religious part, in which mere morals have no share. In Shakespeare or Goethe, even in Newton or Archimedes, there is much which will not be cut down to the shape of the commandments. They have thoughts, feelings, hopes—immortal thoughts and hopes—which have influenced the life of men, and the souls of men, ever since their age, but which the “whole duty of man,” the ethical compendium, does not recognize. Nothing is more unpleasant than a virtuous person with a mean mind. A highly developed moral nature joined to an undeveloped intellectual nature, an undeveloped artistic nature, and a very limited religious nature, is of necessity repulsive. It represents a bit of human nature—a good bit, of course—but a bit only, in disproportionate, unnatural, and revolting prominence; and therefore, unless an artist use delicate care, we are offended. The dismal act of a squalid man needed many condiments to make it pleasant, and therefore Mr. Tennyson was right to mix them subtly and to use them freely.

A mere act of self-denial can indeed scarcely be pleasant upon paper. A heroic struggle with an external adversary, even though it end in a defeat, may easily be made attractive. Human nature likes to see itself look grand, and it looks grand when it is making a brave struggle with foreign foes. But it does not look grand when it is divided against itself. An excellent person striving with temptation is a very admirable being in reality, but he is not a pleasant being in description. We hope he will win and overcome his temptation; but we feel that he would be a more interesting being,

a higher being, if he had not felt that temptation so much. The poet must make the struggle great in order to make the self-denial virtuous, and if the struggle be too great, we are apt to feel some mixture of contempt. The internal metaphysics of a divided nature are but an inferior subject for art, and if they are to be made attractive, much else must be combined with them. If the excellence of "Hamlet" had depended on the ethical qualities of Hamlet, it would not have been the masterpiece of our literature. He acts virtuously of course, and kills the people he ought to kill, but Shakespeare knew that such goodness would not much interest the pit. He made him a handsome prince and a puzzling meditative character, these secular qualities relieve his moral excellence, and so he becomes "nice". In proportion as an artist has to deal with types essentially imperfect, he must disguise their imperfections; he must accumulate around them as many first-rate accessories as may make his readers forget that they are themselves second-rate. The sudden *millionaires* of the present day hope to disguise their social defects by buying old places, and hiding among aristocratic furniture; just so a great artist, who has to deal with characters artistically imperfect, will use an ornate style, will fit them into a scene where there is much else to look at.

For these reasons ornate art is, within the limits, as legitimate as pure art. It does what pure art could not do. The very excellence of pure art confines its employment. Precisely because it gives the best things by themselves and exactly as they are, it fails when it is necessary to describe inferior things among other things, with a list of enhancements and a crowd of accompaniments that in reality do not belong to it. Illusion, half belief, unpleasant types, imperfect types, are as much the proper sphere of ornate art, as an inferior landscape is the proper sphere for the true efficacy of moonlight. A really great landscape needs sunlight and bears sunlight; but moonlight is an equalizer

of beauties ; it gives a romantic unreality to what will not stand the bare truth. And just so does romantic art.

There is, however, a third kind of art which differs from these on the point in which they most resemble one another. Ornate art and pure art have this in common, that they paint the types of literature in a form as perfect as they can. Ornate art, indeed, uses undue disguises and unreal enhancements ; it does not confine itself to the best types ; on the contrary, it is its office to make the best of imperfect types and lame approximations ; but ornate art, as much as pure art, catches its subject in the best light it can, takes the most developed aspect of it which it can find, and throws upon it the most congruous colours it can use. But grotesque art does just the contrary. It takes the type, so to say, *in difficulties*. It gives a representation of it in its minimum development, amid the circumstances least favourable to it, just while it is struggling with obstacles, just where it is encumbered with incongruities. It deals, to use the language of science, not with normal types but with abnormal specimens ; to use the language of old philosophy, not with what Nature is striving to be, but with what by some lapse she has happened to become.

This art works by contrast. It enables you to see, it makes you see, the perfect type by painting the opposite deviation. It shows you what ought to be by what ought not to be, when complete, it reminds you of the perfect image, by showing you the distorted and imperfect image. Of this art we possess in the present generation one prolific master. Mr Browning is an artist working by incongruity. Possibly hardly one of his most considerable efforts can be found which is not great because of its odd mixture. He puts together things which no one else would have put together, and produces on our minds a result which no one else would have produced, or tried to produce. His admirers may not like all we may have to say of

him. But in our way we too are among his admirers. No one ever read him without seeing not only his great ability but his great *mind*. He not only possesses superficial usable talents, but the strong something, the inner secret something, which uses them and controls them ; he is great not in mere accomplishments, but in himself. He has applied a hard strong intellect to real life ; he has applied the same intellect to the problems of his age. He has striven to know what *is* : he has endeavoured not to be cheated by counterfeits, not to be infatuated with illusions. His heart is in what he says. He has battered his brain against his creed till he believes it. He has accomplishments too, the more effective because they are mixed. He is at once a student of mysticism and a citizen of the world. He brings to the club-sofa distinct visions of old creeds, intense images of strange thoughts : he takes to the bookish student tidings of wild Bohemia, and little traces of the *demi-monde*. He puts down what is good for the naughty, and what is naughty for the good. Over women his easier writings exercise that imperious power which belongs to the writings of a great man of the world upon such matters. He knows women, and therefore they wish to know him. If we blame many of Browning's efforts, it is in the interest of art, and not from a wish to hurt or degrade him.

If we wanted to illustrate the nature of grotesque art by an exaggerated instance, we should have selected a poem which the chance of late publication brings us in this new volume. Mr Browning has undertaken to describe what may be called *mind in difficulties*—mind set to make out the universe under the worst and hardest circumstances. He takes “Caliban,” not perhaps exactly Shakespeare’s Caliban, but an analogous and worse creature ; a strong thinking power, but a nasty creature—a gross animal, uncontrolled and un elevated by any feeling of religion or duty. The delineation of him will show that Mr. Browning does not wish to

take undue advantage of his readers by a choice of nice subjects

“ Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,  
 Flat on his belly, in the pit's much mire,  
 With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin ;  
 And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,  
 And feels about his spine small eft-things course,  
 Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh ;  
 And while above his head a pompion plant,  
 Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,  
 Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,  
 And now a flower drops with a bee inside,  
 And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch : ”

This pleasant creature proceeds to give his idea of the origin of the Universe, and it is as follows Caliban speaks in the third person, and is of opinion that the maker of the Universe took to making it on account of his personal discomfort :

“ Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos !  
 'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

“ Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,  
 But not the stars · the stars came otherwise ;  
 Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that :  
 Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,  
 And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same

“ Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease :  
 He hated that He cannot change His cold,  
 Nor cure its ache 'Hath spied an icy fish  
 That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,  
 And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine  
 O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,  
 A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave ;  
 Only she ever sickened, found repulse  
 At the other kind of water, not her life,  
 (Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)  
 Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,  
 And in her old bounds buried her despair,  
 Hating and loving warmth alike : so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,  
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.  
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech,  
Yon auk, one fire-eye, in a ball of foam,  
That floats and feeds ; a certain badger brown  
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye  
By moonlight , and the pie with the long tongue  
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,  
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,  
But will not eat the ants , the ants themselves  
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks  
About their hole—He made all these and more,  
Made all we see, and us, in spite · how else ? "

It may seem perhaps to most readers that these lines are very difficult, and that they are unpleasant. And so they are. We quote them to illustrate, not the success of grotesque art, but the *nature* of grotesque art. It shows the end at which this species of art aims, and if it fails it is from overboldness in the choice of a subject by the artist, or from the defects of its execution. A thinking faculty more in difficulties—a great type—an inquisitive, searching intellect under more disagreeable conditions, with worse helps, more likely to find falsehood, less likely to find truth, can scarcely be imagined. Nor is the mere description of the thought at all bad. on the contrary, if we closely examine it, it is very clever. Hardly any one could have amassed so many ideas at once nasty and suitable. But scarcely any readers—any casual readers—who are not of the sect of Mr. Browning's admirers will be able to examine it enough to appreciate it. From a defect, partly of subject, and partly of style, many of Mr. Browning's works make a demand upon the reader's zeal and sense of duty to which the nature of most readers is unequal. They have on the turf the convenient expression "staying power": some horses can hold on and others cannot. But hardly any reader not of especial and peculiar nature can hold on through such composition. There is not enough of "staying power" in human

nature. One of his greatest admirers once owned to us that he seldom or never began a new poem without looking on in advance, and foreseeing with caution what length of intellectual adventure he was about to commence. Whoever will work hard at such poems will find much mind in them: they are a sort of quarry of ideas, but whoever goes there will find these ideas in such a jagged, ugly, useless shape that he can hardly bear them.

We are not judging Mr Browning simply from a hasty, recent production. All poets are liable to misconceptions, and if such a piece as "Caliban upon Setebos" were an isolated error, a venial and particular exception, we should have given it no prominence. We have put it forward because it just elucidates both our subject and the characteristics of Mr Browning. But many other of his best known pieces do so almost equally; what several of his devotees think his best piece is quite enough illustrative for anything we want. It appears that on Holy Cross day at Rome the Jews were obliged to listen to a Christian sermon in the hope of their conversion, though this is, according to Mr Browning, what they really said when they came away:

"Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!  
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week  
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,  
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,  
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime  
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?  
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?  
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years  
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?  
Fair play's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?  
Stand on a line ere you start for the church

Higgledy, piggledy, packed we lie,  
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,

Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,  
 Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.  
 Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs  
 And buzz for the bishop—here he comes ”

And after similar nice remarks for a church, the edified congregation concludes :

“ But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,  
 And the rest sit silent and count the clock,  
 Since forced to muse the appointed time  
 On these precious facts and truths sublime,—  
 Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,  
 In saying Ben Ezra’s Song of Death

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,  
 Called sons and sons’ sons to his side,  
 And spoke, ‘ This world has been harsh and strange ;  
 Something is wrong ’ there needeth a change  
 But what, or where ? at the last, or first ?  
 In one point only we sinned, at worst

‘ The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,  
 And again in his border see Israel set  
 When Judah beholds Jerusalem,  
 The stranger-seed shall be joined to them .  
 To Jacob’s House shall the Gentiles cleave  
 So the Prophet saith and his sons believe

‘ Ay, the children of the chosen race  
 Shall carry and bring them to their place  
 In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,  
 Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,  
 When the slave enslave, the oppressed ones o’er  
 The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

‘ God spoke, and gave us the word to keep .  
 Bade never fold the hands nor sleep  
 ’Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,  
 Till Christ at the end relieve our guard  
 By His servant Moses the watch was set .  
 Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

recommends, and Nature punishes their disregard of her warning by subjection to the ugly one, by belief in it. Just so the most industrious critics get the most admiration. They think it unjust to rest in their instinctive natural horror: they overcome it, and angry Nature gives them over to ugly poems and marries them to detestable stanzas.

Mr. Browning possibly, and some of the worst of Mr. Browning's admirers certainly, will say that these grotesque objects exist in real life, and therefore they ought to be, at least may be, described in art. But, though pleasure is not the end of poetry, pleasing is a condition of poetry. An exceptional monstrosity of horrid ugliness cannot be made pleasing, except it be made to suggest—to recall—the perfection, the beauty, from which it is a deviation. Perhaps in extreme cases no art is equal to this, but then such self-imposed problems should not be worked by the artist; these out-of-the-way and detestable subjects should be let alone by him. It is rather characteristic of Mr. Browning to neglect this rule. He is the most of a realist, and the least of an idealist, of any poet we know. He evidently sympathizes with some part at least of Bishop Blougram's apology. Anyhow this world exists. "There *is* good wine—there *are* pretty women—there *are* comfortable benefices—there *is* money, and it is pleasant to spend it. Accept the creed of your age and you get these, reject that creed and you lose them. And for what do you lose them? For a fancy creed of your own, which no one else will accept, which hardly any one will call a 'creed,' which most people will consider a sort of disbelief." Again, Mr. Browning evidently loves what we may call the realism, the grotesque realism, of orthodox Christianity. Many parts of it in which great divines have felt keen difficulties are quite pleasant to him. He must *see* his religion, he must have an "object-lesson" in believing. He must have a creed that will *take*, which wins and holds the miscellaneous world,

which stout men will heed, which nice women will adore. The spare moments of solitary religion—the “obdurate questionings,” the high “instincts,” the “first affections,” the “shadowy recollections,”

“ Which, do they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day—  
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing , ” \*

the great but vague faith—the unutterable tenets—seem to him worthless, visionary ; they are not enough “immersed in matter”, † they move about “in worlds not realized ” We wish he could be tried like the prophet once ; he would have found God in the earthquake and the storm ; he would have deciphered from them a bracing and a rough religion he would have known that crude men and ignorant women felt them too, and he would accordingly have trusted them , but he would have distrusted and disregarded the “still small voice ” : he would have said it was “fancy”—a thing you thought you heard to-day, but were not sure you had heard to-morrow. he would call it a nice illusion, an immaterial prettiness ; he would ask triumphantly, “How are you to get the mass of men to heed this little thing ? ” he would have persevered and insisted, “ *My wife* does not hear it ”

But although a suspicion of beauty, and a taste for ugly reality, have led Mr Browning to exaggerate the functions and to caricature the nature of grotesque art, we own, or rather we maintain, that he has given many excellent specimens of that art within its proper boundaries and limits Take an example, his picture of what we may call the *bourgeois* nature in *difficulties* : in the utmost difficulty, in contact with magic and the supernatural He has made of it something homely, comic, true ; reminding us of what *bourgeois* nature

\* Wordsworth “Intimations of Immortality,” ix  
† *Locke on the Human Understanding*, book iv , chap. iii , 1, 2

The world is grown to one vast drysaltery  
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,  
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !  
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !  
 —I found the Weser rolling o'er me  
 You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
 ' Go,' said the Mayor, ' and get long poles,  
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes !  
 Consult with carpenters and builders,  
 And leave in our town not even a trace  
 Of the rats ! ' when suddenly up the face  
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
 With a ' First, if you please, my thousand guilders ! '

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;  
 So did the Corporation too  
 For council dinners made rare havoc  
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;  
 And half the money would replenish  
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish  
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !  
 ' Beside,' quoth the Mayor, with a knowing wink,  
 ' Our business was done at the river's brink,  
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
 From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
 And a matter of money to put in your poke ;  
 But as for the guilders, what we spoke  
 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty  
 A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty ! '

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,  
 ' No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !  
 I've promised to visit by dinner-time  
 Bagdat, and accept the prime  
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,

Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—  
 With him I proved no bargain-driver  
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !  
 And folks who put me in a passion  
 May find me pipe to another fashion '

' How ? ' cried the Mayor, ' d'ye think I'll brook  
 Being worse treated than a Cook ?  
 Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?  
 You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,  
 Blow your pipe there till you burst ! '

Once more he stept into the street ,  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
 Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,  
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
 Out came the children running.

All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter

And I must not omit to say  
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
 Of alien people that ascribe  
 The outlandish ways and dress  
 On which their neighbours lay such stress  
 To their fathers and mothers having risen  
 Out of some subterraneous prison  
 Into which they were trepanned  
 Long time ago in a mighty band  
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
 But how or why they don't understand "

Something more we had to say of Mr Browning, but we must stop. It is singularly characteristic of this age that the poems which rise to the surface should be examples of ornate art, and grotesque art, not of pure art. We live in the realm of the *half* educated. The number of readers grows daily, but the quality of readers does not improve rapidly. The middle class is scattered, heedless; it is well-meaning, but aimless; wishing to be wise, but ignorant how to be wise. The aristocracy of England never was a literary aristocracy, never even in the days of its full power, of its unquestioned predominance, did it guide—did it even seriously try to guide—the taste of England. Without guidance young men, and tired men, are thrown amongst a mass of books; they have to choose which they like; many of them would much like to improve their culture, to chasten their taste, if they knew how. But left to themselves they take, not pure art, but showy art; not that which permanently relieves the eye and makes it happy whenever it looks, and as long as it looks, but *glaring* art which catches and arrests the eye for a moment, but which in the end fatigues it. But before the wholesome remedy of nature—the fatigue—arrives, the hasty reader has passed on to some new excitement, which in its turn stimulates for an instant, and then is passed by for ever. These conditions are not favourable to the due appreciation of pure art—of that art which must be known before it is admired—which must have fastened irrevocably on the brain before you appreciate it—which you must love ere it will seem worthy of your love. Women too, whose voice on literature counts as well as that of men—and in a light literature counts for more than that of men—women, such as we know them, such as they are likely to be, ever prefer a delicate unreality to a true or firm art. A dressy literature, an exaggerated literature seem to be fated to us. These are our curses, as other times had theirs.

“ And yet

Think not the living times forgot,  
Ages of heroes fought and fell,  
That Homer in the end might tell ;  
O'er grovelling generations past  
Upstood the Doric fane at last ,  
And countless hearts on countless years  
Had wasted thoughts, and hopes, and fears,  
Rude laughter and unmeaning tears ,  
Ere England Shakespeare saw, or Rome  
The pure perfection of her dome  
Others I doubt not, if not we,  
The issue of our toils shall see ,  
Young children gather as their own  
The harvest that the dead had sown,  
The dead forgotten and unknown ” \*

\* *The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, vol 11, p 472

THE END

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